

# **Criticizing Ben 0.1**

**Quips, Quotes and Quandaries**



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## **Introduction**

**Quips, criticism, observations, common sense or nonsense... you decide! My desire is to encourage independent thought instead of automatically agreeing with or taking the word of *anyone*.**

**When I set out to criticize Ben I thought it would be a lonely task, he's a historical giant and a *sacred cow*. It didn't take long to find out that people have been criticizing Ben *forever* and it also wasn't long before I realized the greatness of the man!**

**I've tried to write with some humor and chapters include famous quotes related to the section's content. The rest are my thoughts, based on years of; marriage, business, curiosity and observation😊**

## Adam and Eve-n

“I see that I was mistaken about Eve... it’s better to live outside the Garden with her, than inside it without her” ... Mark Twain

God *gave* Adam a wonderful gift but he also may have been playing tricks. Eve was *made* irresistible so procreation would work but Adam and Eve found it nearly impossible to get along. Our needs and biological imperatives overlap but we’re more like different species than different genders.

Men sometimes find women somewhat *ridiculous* but we’re drawn to them like moths to a flame... okay, *maybe* we’re the ridiculous ones but we’re still drawn to the flame... I think you know why.

I suppose I could do some research into the origin of the word woman but it’s more fun to speculate. .. woman = wee-man, womb-man, woe(to)-man, woah(nelly)-man!

Have you ever noticed there’s at least one great looking waitress in every restaurant... or at least one to whom every man’s eyes are drawn!

How many times have we said, “If she were just five years older... or twenty years younger.” Dreaming and fantasizing... we do a lot of that.

Women do their best to look young and fertile... this attracts men, who woo such women with gifts and compliments. The gals eventually succumb to these overtures and the cycle continues but not without incident. The *system* - though effective for continuation of the species is far from perfect.

**Is it inconsistent to love and respect women but believe men shouldn't be ruled by them and vice versa? Men and women need laws but fewer of them and governance not rulers.**

**Like an orgasm, shedding tears is a *release*... maybe that's why women cry more than men. Since women have more difficulty climaxing, crying may be a way to compensate. Reportedly, crying, climaxing, laughing and even pleasant conversation release endorphins. They say laughter is the best medicine but I cast my vote for climaxing and place crying a distant third... certainly stewing is the worst pill of all.**

**Shoes are nice and men do notice them but not as much as your girlfriends. First we notice your face and figure, unfortunately brains and personality rank no higher than shoes on our *list*.**

**“God's little gift is on the rag, poster girl posing in a fashion mag...Canine, feline, Jekyll and Hyde... Hello it's me, I'm not at home If you'd like to reach me, leave me alone”... Cheryl Crow.**



## Advice

“Advice is what we ask for when we already know the answer but wish we didn't”... Erica Jong

If you seek advice from idiots, you'll get idiotic advice. They'll do their best to convince you the world's unfair. Like everyone, they want their world view *validated and* dragging other people down works fine for that.

The wise are often unavailable to dispense advice because they're busy learning new things... the fool's always available because he *knows* everything already!

No one is a *nobody*, we're all unique... we're all a *somebody*!

When a successful person gives you advice, it's not *just* from them because they learned from other successful people. You're benefiting from generations of good advice when you listen to achievers. The theory's the same regarding knuckle-heads, they're giving you the same *wrong* advice that was given to them.

When you're advised to *do one thing right every day*, it means -- do more things right than wrong and your day will be net positive. You'll have had a good day, when the positive side outweighs the negative.

A fool doesn't *always* give poor advice but most of the time you get what you pay for! Foolish advice is worse than no advice at all because it does more harm than good.

Like most people, I'm *full of it*... advice I mean but it must be lousy because no one listens, much less heeds!

Successful people aren't born *right* they just tend to follow good advice and so called *losers* aren't so much wrong, as followers of bad advice. That doesn't change their feelings and the man who loses still resents the *winner*. There're so many people setting good examples, that I have to ask... why is it that we listen to bone heads instead?



Have you ever noticed that lots of bench warmers become coaches but few *first stringers* do?

We meet far more people working to *have* things than working to *change* things.

People are always offering advice when I don't want it but when there's something I really need to know, they clam up!

If only dummies touch a hot stove twice, why do I keep getting burned? I don't *just* mean by something hot, the adage applies to all kinds of mistakes!

### Aging

"A person's memory has no more sense than his conscience"...  
Mark Twain.

Oh to be 18 again and not blow it!

So what *am* I? This crumbling body or this faltering mind?

Life is so short that we can't comprehend our insignificance, it's still as worth living as ever and you don't find people standing in line for the alternative.

Don't write lists, or voice record everything you're trying to remember... instead of artificial memory, use your brain... if you don't use it, won't you lose it? However, when it comes to life and death matters have a backup system. Losing a list shouldn't be like losing your mind but I still need to find mine!

What is *instinct*, other than a species collectively remembering that *something works*. Whether ant or human some memories are so ingrained they've become instincts.

The human body is like Humpty Dumpty... when parts break, we can't *be put back together* as good as new - so take care of yourself!

Funny...turning 51 wasn't nearly as traumatic as 50... by then the damage was done! That 50<sup>th</sup> birthday was rough but probably more fun than sixty or 70 will be. On the plus side, fifty has advantages, now I can *legitimately* opt out of tubing, skiing and skating ... due to my *advanced age*.

*You know your're getting old when you look at a 30 year old picture of yourself and say... "dang is that the same person?"*

Will life's *tribulations* make me stronger or just give me more gray hair? Father time and Mother Nature still reign and they always will!

"We may not understand the meaning of our life until we're forty"... unknown. Most people try to understand it before then but when we're forty we're too *invested* in our world view to change. We've been spouting the same line for decades and don't want to *lose face* by jumping ship but that doesn't mean we shouldn't! It's a victory not a capitulation to change some of our views... consider the possibilities!

I know I'm getting old because I'm older than; the president and virtually all pro athletes, not to mention the trees and buildings around here!

As we age, the last things to go are our strongest instincts. In a nursing home, old men still have a roving eye and old ladies love babies and shoes.

Ben said, "two things in life are certain... death and taxes" and you can add *never ending* bills to the list. Regardless of what lifestyle we choose, the bills roll in and the struggle continues. As we age, we look forward to *checking out* and moving on to

something better... or at least to enjoying *a long rest*. A good life is having a job you like, paying the bills, growing old gracefully and having some fun along the way!

It's not unusual for the *proud and haughty* to become the *mean and nasty* as they age and realize they haven't accomplished what they set out to. Those who are humble early on, may not turn nasty, since things weren't that great in the first place!

Looking in the mirror after the business trip he thought, "dang, I did some damage." Five days later, he still hadn't ventured onto the scales... he did his breast, not his best... the result is, man boobs, frick'n man boobs...

For the most part, we're sucked through the intake and spit out the exhaust... fuel for the Earth's as it circles the sun... the most we can hope for is a good run and maybe a small role in this passion play.

Young folks say "don't trust anyone over thirty", people in their seventies don't trust anyone under sixty, those in their sixties don't trust anyone in their fifties and so on... hmmm.

What is this "sleep" that everyone talks about? The only thing I'm experiencing is deprivation of that dreamy state.

*If* there's anything "good" about losing your memory, it's all the exercise you get hustling from room to room trying to remember what we're looking for.

Loss of memory, impotence, dry box etc., can be slowed down but not curtailed... so come to terms with it!

How long does it take to forget something? It depends, but a year's sufficient for most bad decisions and the like. That's why we keep falling for the same scams over and over.

Our butts get flatter with age and look even worse because the junk in our trunk turns into junk in the front!



New York City

When's the last time you went up the stairs three at a time? It's been a long time but I'm still good for two at a time... occasionally.

There seem to be some years that are developmentally "important" and others that we rarely hear about. Four, ten, thirteen, eighteen and twenty-one, seem like milestones but the intervening years are seldom discussed.

Is heart bypass much different than rebuilding a car's engine and a transplant like installing a new one?

If we're slowly dying *anyway*, does smoking, drinking and eating junk food just mean we're speeding up the process?

Maybe the brain's *designed* to help us as we approach the end. For decades, we're content to think, "I still have a few good years left." Later, when these *good years* have passed, the brain slowly closes shop, leaving us incapable of comprehending our plight...

**Just as ADD serves a purpose, so does forgetting... do you want to remember every face you see and every silly thing you hear?**

**By the time you start "celebrating" the fact that so-and-so is bald and you're not, you're too old to *enjoy* it!**

**I used to have a decent arm, now I throw like a girl... darn thing's developed a hitch in the giddy-up.**

**Our neighborhood's graying... men who were in their prime when we moved in, are on transplant waiting lists or sadder still - they're dead.**

**Too bad we can't throw people in the dryer for a few minutes to get rid of the wrinkles!**

**Time doesn't really pass faster for adults than it does for children. We're just more aware that the sand is running out of the hourglass.**

**It's always something but that's a good thing, if we weren't constantly *dealing* with things, we'd be dead! Like aches and pains... sometimes, they're the only way you know you're alive. Feeling like you're dying makes you appreciate that you're living like nothing else!**

**Funny how we rationalize things, I'm north of 50 but keep telling myself I have 20 or 30 good years left. If I make it to 70, I'll be saying the same thing... we just keep pushing back the day of reckoning!**

**I feel for beautiful women, as they age, they *fall* much further than the rest of us. They continue to be judged by their appearance, which even in the best case scenario is a losing proposition. Eventually, they become invisible like the rest of us -- welcome to the club ladies, it's really not that bad!**

**I thought life was supposed to get less complicated as we get older and the kids move out. So far, exactly the opposite has occurred...**

maybe it's in "old age" that things will get less complicated but looking at my parent's lives, I doubt that too.

The "expert" said that with medical breakthroughs, some baby boomers could live to be 150 and new babies might live to be 1,000... tell that to Methuselah.

My body's like that old truck in the barn... if I can *keep it running*, it might keep going for a long time but once it rusts out, it's impossible to restart. The same can be said of our bodies... if we get too run down, forget about it! Maybe there'll be cheap, reliable replacement parts for us eventually but that day seems very far away!

As we age, we're still *recognizable but* as we approach the end, we become mere shadows of our selves, *fortunately* by then we're may neither know, or care.

When we finish our life's work, we're "called home", so why hurry? Whether it's your yard, job or whatever, take your time! Don't admit that you're finished and maybe the good Lord will allow you another season of work.

They say you see a lot more old drunks than old doctors... is that true, or do drunks just look old sooner?

Is it better to have a long memory so you never forget slights and insults or a short memory so you quickly forget them?



**Indiana**

**America**

**"What the American public doesn't know, is what makes it the American public"... Mark Twain**

**I wonder... if the earth was ever attacked by aliens, would Earthlings band together and mount a united resistance? Or just like we've divided and conquered our foes, would aliens use that strategy on us?**

**There's got to be something in the water because people in different parts of the country look, talk and act a different.**

**America's a great country, our border guards give illegal immigrants water when they have been abandoned in the desert by their Coyote guides... that wouldn't happen in most countries.**

**When America started, its founders had dreams of freedom and opportunity for most of its citizens but our country was terribly flawed by slavery and Indian Wars. America's virtuousness has**

been as *chartable* as the stock market... there've been booms, busts and a depression or two.

I hope the U.S. can solve its problems but we're discouraged from discussing exactly *why* we're in the shape we're in and that doesn't help...

We're told we're Americans, not hyphenated Americans and that we must stand together for the common cause. The problem with this is it requires abandoning ones heritage in favor of a common cause that benefits certain people over others... in my case, the *common cause* may be detrimental to my relatives in the Middle East. I'd rather work for a just and peaceful solution in the Middle East than for the *solution* promoted by special interest groups. Unfortunately for me, I'm told to go with that flow, or I'm not a *true* American.

I'm grateful my father and mother's ancestors came to this great country but that gratitude is tempered by the realization that my relatives overseas seem to be doing quite well. Over here, we're very small fish in a very large pond... in the "old countries" my relatives seem to have greater opportunity to affect their society than we do here. (I have to admit being wrong on this one!)

We're reminded we should be grateful to the army, in the *old days*, we were told we should be "grateful to the king." Humans are social beings and do better when part of a group, so cooperation is essential and reasonable gratitude is good. However, those harping that we should be grateful to them have an ulterior motive...it's called lust for power.

Funny how we complain about the French, who helped us win our independence and complain much less about the British who were our overlords.



Have you ever noticed that Americans say "counterclockwise and Brit's say "anti-clockwise"... peculiar folks those limeys!

We have purges here too... but in our case, you don't end up in Siberia, you end up as a Washington lobbyist. It's a strength of our system that we don't have violent purges but a weakness that such rogues remain in the power structure at all.

This *is* a great nation, so instead of resting on our laurels and bragging, we should work even harder to improve our society... it can be done!

Teddy Roosevelt said, "if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else...But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American, and nothing but an American." I agree in part but have to ask... do we have to support the *splendid little wars* Teddy seemed to like?

It's great to see Americans doing good things around the world... it is also great to see people from any country doing good things around the world - I applaud them all!

It's an oversimplification but I think I've met two types of Canadians... those who want to be like Americans and those who don't...I respect the latter more.

I believe we're possibly the greatest country in the world but there're other great nations and we're not so far above them that we should be the masters of the universe.

### Authority

"We're not taught to think, we're taught to agree"... unknown.

If by treachery, elections or the *kindness of your heart*, you allow someone excessive authority, you can be sure they'll use it against you!

**I feel like I live in a nation of brainwashed people... not everyone but there're millions who seem that way. The people we're at war with are also brainwashed... it doesn't make for a very hopeful situation. It's always the same, you're supposed to feel like this, believe that and most of all do as you're told!**

**"When the people fear their government, there is tyranny; when the government fears the people, there is liberty"... Thomas Jefferson**



### **Banksters**

**"Banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies"... Thomas Jefferson**

**The banksters herd us like cattle down the long narrow chute and we barely resist!**

**We've given trillions to the Wall Street gangsters and what will we get for it? Probably several more generations enslaved via the national debt. I'm guessing that Jefferson and Franklin would be well pleased to see us overthrow these tyrants.**

**As you drive your "beater" down the street, think of the bankster, in his mansion, or yacht and remember... your hard work made it possible! The mortgages they hold on our houses, bodies and souls allows our *masters* to rule us like a herd of sheep.**

**If I had to choose between bailing out banks or auto companies, I would choose the auto companies. They make world-class products, while Wall Street is the menace our founding fathers warned us against. We're addicted to credit and submit to the banksters when they warn that we can't get along without them. If they were defanged, we would get along fine, by utilizing contracts without usurious interest rates and courts to adjudicate disagreements.**

**The transition from debt slavery to freedom will be difficult, we won't be able to buy all the toys we crave but in the long run we'll be much better off. If we continue conspicuous consumption and incurring massive debt, we'll suffer graver consequences than any recession.**

**CEOs and bankers shouldn't make hundreds, or thousands of times more than ordinary workers. Even *if* they're maximizing returns for their shareholders, the system is out of whack when workers are "axed" and their jobs sent overseas (to be performed by virtual slaves), all in the name of enriching investors. Most Americans are at least small investors, through 401k or pension plans but that doesn't justify the greed and avarice of the bankers and CEOs.**

**There's nothing wrong with investing in companies through stocks but it's unnecessary and ridiculous to reward management and Wall Street so handsomely for their roles. This is especially true when we consider that through lobbying and graft, they have altered and manipulated the system solely for their own gain. These crooks should lose their yachts, instead of "Joe" six-pack**

losing his bass boat. There's something wrong with a system where people make millions manipulating markets, via keystrokes on the computer, while those breaking their backs, or wracking their brains to produce something of real value make a relative pittance. The system needn't be scrapped but if it isn't reformed, the eventual outcome will be chaos or collapse... and we don't need that!

**"Let me control a nation's money supply and I care NOT who makes it laws." -Mayer Amshel Rothschild, Founder of the Rothschild banking dynasty.**

Other than psychotic dictators, banksters are the most dangerous people in the world. As Mayer Rothschild implied, control of a nation's money supply is the key to controlling the nation. With that control and by being the paymaster of the troops, special interest groups have the ability to start and finance wars for their own nefarious reasons... but I digress.

When you can print the money to pay the army, bribe the politicians and enslave the populace, you pretty much run the show! While the hard working tax payers are pinching pennies, banksters receive record bonuses and reward themselves with mansions and private islands.

To those who say banks simply play the game according to rules laid out by congress, I suggest the bankers had their lobbyists deliver said rules to congress, which obediently passed them into law for their masters.

By giving banksters a trillion dollars, we've enabled them to arm themselves with the financial bullets to hold us hostage for another hundred years!

*If* great fortunes are not based on great crimes, as Balzac said, are they not at least based on exploitation of others?

The pundit is defending hedge funds by claiming they are already highly regulated. "They can only work with registered investors, they can only have 99 clients in total and can only accept

investments of \$1 million or more." It sounds more like collusion than regulation when by law, they *only* work for the uber rich!

Unlike the nuclear bomb genie, the “to big to fail” bank genie can still be put back in the bottle... let’s roll!

“If the American people only understood the rank injustice of our money and banking system, there would be a revolution before morning”...Andrew Jackson

### Battle of the Sexes

“No one will ever win the battle of the sexes; there's too much fraternizing with the enemy” ... Henry Kissinger

We should realize that women eventually won’t need us at all... an egg can be fertilized without sperm and implanted in the uterus. We’d better behave! On the other hand, if things ever go that far, then men might want to *make* Stepford wives after all... If it ever comes to that, then this battle of the sexes has been lost by both sides.

Women shave their bodies, paint their faces, hide their wrinkles, enhance every aspect of their fleeting beauty and then criticize us for judging the book by the cover? It may seem necessary for them to do this, just as men think its necessary to do what we do. There’re deceptions on both sides and *my* how we fall for them! I suppose nature, society and the drive to succeed reproductively or otherwise is what leads to all this.

We all know supermodels are unrealistically tall and thin so it’s no surprise that here at the mall I see many tall, stately blondes who are actually brunettes of average height!

If 30% of women are blondes and 90% of blondes are brunettes... what percentage of women are brunettes? The answer is 97% according to my daughter who helped me with the math. In any case, I guess *product packaging* is important in the mating game!

On TV, they're showing the Bunny Ranch in Las Vegas and the seemingly happy "working girls." Orgasms are the only things faked here and I'll bet there're a lot of tears *back at the ranch*.

The experts say both men and women speak 16,000 words a day on the average. If that's true can we "install" word counters and penalize people who exceed their limit?

I have to admit, I wouldn't mind "having" a bevy of beauties... with all due respect, what man wouldn't?

Most guys dream about *ravaging* the bad girls... but we're even more interested in ravaging the good ones!

Gals with "factory air" are cool but too much means they're anorexic.

Neither men, nor women are content for very long... men eventually want more sex while women *must have* new shoes.

Suspicion on the part of women towards men is hardwired and may be necessary for the survival of her and her children... why else would it be so prevalent?

What's worse, knowing somebody married you for your looks, or knowing they married you for your money?

I hear the old song, "Do You Want to Know a Secret" and it reminds me that everyone likes hearing secrets but no one can keep them. Correct me if I'm wrong but women in particular to like secrets and use them as a form of currency. While men are not opposed to *using secrets*, they're more likely to employ violence to get their way... women also commit murder occasionally but usually by different means... arsenic, old lace and all that.

It's ironic that beautiful women who are the most ogled at, eventually become the least looked at... it's the law of averages and a sad reality of life.

The song says, "girls just want to have fun" ... the corollary is "guys just want to have sex!"

God surely designed the female body... I'm just wondering if he had a little help from *the devil*?

Among mammals, the human female is one of the very few that can be sexually receptive almost all the time. This gives her the ability to drive men crazy all the time, not just during *the season*!

I believe men should consider the counsel and advice of women but not be under their thumb... that isn't natural.



Grandpas

### Three Generations

Its 5:30, my wife and daughter have been gone for three hours... I pour myself a glass of wine... they have left me unsupervised for too long. Left to my own devices, my primitive instincts have a tendency to take over.

Bachelor night was fun -- I smoked a cigar, ate calamari, drank martinis and later built a fire for me and the dogs. Later that night I woke up in pain, with stomach acid burning a hole in my throat. Running to the porcelain altar I tried to purge my sins but there was nothing. The next morning I made the bed *bachelor*

*style... it took 10 seconds instead of the three minutes my wife and I spend most mornings.*

Interesting how in nature, there're few species where the male and female live together and even fewer where the sexes mate for life... we humans are beating the odds!

Why do females of so many species have synchronized periods or "seasons? Scientists say it's a way of reducing overpopulation, it may also be a tactic in the battle of the sexes, by which females attempt to stymie the will of men. In harems, women's periods tend to synchronize but that doesn't achieve the *desired effect* of controlling man's urges... instead he keeps seeking new women for the "stable."

The battle of the sexes has been going on forever, with men historically using force to keep women *in line*... ideally men want multiple partners, available at their beck and call. Women use everything at their disposal to counter mans' attempt to treat them like a herd, innately knowing they are far more valuable than men suppose.

### Bees and Ants...

"The ant is knowing and wise but he doesn't know enough to take a vacation" ... Clarence Day

I wonder... other than the Queen, are there any other "celebrities" in the hive?

The big city bank is a *bee hive of activity* with each worker performing a specific role. When their performance is in unison, they make money, when they don't, they lose customers.

Society has always operated like a beehive, historically there were countless; cities, states and countries each run by its own *bosses*. Now our leaders seem intent on creating one gigantic hive. The people engineering our fate *may* have good intentions but that's



beside the point. The problem is, independent-minded people will have no place to go... at least until outer space becomes an option.

I enjoyed people watching at the *beer garden*... so many different shapes, sizes and interesting faces. The next morning I see an Ant on the counter and wonder, do Ants look each other in the face, or just touch antennae?

If human societies are little more than glorified ant colonies, then who's to say that America's better than Russia, China or Iran? Maybe America's better but if it's like an ant colony, how much better could it be and should we impose our ways on others?

Infrastructure is vital to human civilization... it takes an enormous effort to tunnel a highway through a mountain but consider the benefits of the endeavor! Once completed and with regular maintenance, that tunnel could last a thousand years... I'd like to see Ants do something like that!

Look at how human society and construction has evolved in complexity! Compare a termite mound to an ancient mud human structure and they look somewhat similar... fast forward to a modern skyscraper and the similarities mostly disappear. A major difference between termites and humans, is the size of our brains and how the workers are treated... unfortunately we don't necessarily treat our workers better than the termite queen does.

I'm not saying women are like worker bees and men are like drones there're a few shared traits. Is our behavior *as* programmed as that of the lesser beasts? No but neither is it as different as we'd like to think!

Do you hear that buzzing sound coming from the hive... I think the girls are all talking at once... I'm kidding... kidding, kidding!

Like bees in a hive, we're taught to *want what's best for the society*. Secretly however, we want what's best for ourselves and when possible we act accordingly. That's separates us from Bees, although even in the hive, there may be a few rebels... undoubtedly they're dealt with harshly!

Other than through a police state, how can huge numbers of self-centered people be controlled? Society is a bee hive of activity, where the rich get richer and the poor get enough to keep them from rioting. Gals love to shop, guys like to watch TV and our masters know this. These activities along with *happy meals* are all that's necessary to keep us in line. If you get rowdy the local SWAT shows up at your door and if a country gets out of line the *alliance* pays them a visit. It's not all bad and certainly not all good... it's just the most efficient way to manage this thundering herd called humanity!

Factory workers, salesman, construction workers, secretaries and executives... we're all part of a gigantic human ant farm. We may be at the apex of evolution on our planet but in the *greater scheme of things*, are our lives much different than an ants? Actually they are... or should be!

If you want to get some idea about the future of American society, study China, where the government "manages" over a billion people. China reminds me of the proverbial Ant farm and America's taking major steps in that direction. With our restless and growing population, our leaders will hold increasing power and exert greater control.... those who don't like it will have little recourse other than to *submit*.

## Beauty

"A frail gift is beauty, which grows less as time draws on and is devoured by its own years" ... Ovid

I don't know if this is a snafu or catch 22 but men look for beautiful wives, while women often select less attractive men who they think are better providers. The problem is that both sexes are fooled... men ignore brains and personality, for fleeting beauty and women are beguiled by all kinds of rogues!

Looking in the mirror at this saggy face, the song *doggie in the window* comes to mind. They say beauty is only skin deep... but

how many people *really* believe that? Aren't most of us just paying lip service?

What is the connection between the words “ravishing beauty” and “ravage a beauty?” One *describes* beauty the other means harming it... tragically they often come together.

Walking around Manhattan, I see hundreds of beautiful women and wonder *how* there can be so many? I suppose you’re bound to pass a hundred beauties when you’ve passed ten thousand people in a day!



### Ben Franklin

“I disapprove of what you say but I will defend to the death your right to say it”... Evelyn Beatrice Hall

I was surprised to learn that this quote which I thought was *a Franklin* is actually attributable to Evelyn Beatrice Hall. She supposedly penned it to describe how the philosopher Voltaire felt about the subject. Voltaire and Ben Franklin supposedly met, so using the six degrees of separation principle I credited the quote to Ben... silly me!

Franklin did say, “those who would trade freedom for security, in the end, get and deserve neither” which isn’t particularly related to the above but I like it!

Why you ask, would anyone criticize Ben? It’s because he deserves a bit of criticism and I think he can take it! Ben was a bit more like most of us, than Washington or Jefferson... they seem more like marble statues than human beings. Surprisingly, the more I learn about Ben, the more I respect him... I can’t say the same for some of our other *founding fathers*.

Ben seemed less pompous than George Washington and the others, yet just as brilliant. Like George and the rest of the *gang*, Ben was far from perfect... these men were not superheroes!

I’ve never read about Ben fighting in a battle but he did risk being hung as a traitor for his revolutionary activities, which included lobbying France for weapons and naval support. Franklin also romanced the ladies of France this while his wife was alone in Philadelphia! I’d have to give Ben a “B”, for his walk and an “A” for his talk... does that make me an easy or hard grader?

Odd and sadly enough, while Ben was whooping it up with the ladies of France, George and Tom were reportedly *having their way* with women they held as slaves!

By protecting the rights of the weak and disposed, we’re protecting everyone’s rights. The more of an “outsider” one is, the better chance he has of surviving the whims of the “insiders”, *if* a policy of protecting everyone’s rights is guaranteed. On the other hand, if someone’s speech is insidious and may cause harm to others... why aid or abet them? Even if it’s in the name of

protecting “free speech”, we shouldn’t help those who if given power, would curtail the freedom of others!

Ben is one of our favorite founding fathers but it's difficult to idolize this roly-poly dumpling of a man. Unlike the stately Washington, Lincoln and Jefferson, old Ben just doesn't fit the mold of an idol. Which leads me to ask, was Franklin the most perfect of the founding fathers, or simply the least imperfect?

I was shocked to learn that a thousand human body parts were found under the house Ben Franklin occupied during his years in London. *Allegedly*, he, or a friend was involved in facilitating the procurement of human body parts for doctors and professors of medicine. Apparently the idea of donating one’s body to science hadn’t caught on yet in Franklin’s day! Ben also reportedly owned two slaves during his life, another blemish on his mostly *proud record*.

The government’s job should be to guarantee free speech, by preventing the majority, or other groups from persecuting people with different views... however, *defending to the death* those whose speech you strongly disapprove of, should be a personal decision and to me it sounds highly counterintuitive.

Ben Franklin patented the Franklin stove, invented bifocals and lightning rods, "discovered" electricity, charted the Gulf Stream and was indeed a genius! On the other hand... he also invented the “Glass Armonica”, one of the most bizarre musical instruments ever!

Ben Franklin’s, “Old Mistresses Apologue” is a classic! In it, he advises a friend, “that in all your Amours you should prefer old Women to young ones” and goes on to enumerate the reasons why... interesting!

The government says we must protect everyone's freedom of speech... but there seems to be certain speech, that’s “more equal” than others and worthy of greater protection under the law... and that sounds disturbingly like Orwell’s Animal Farm.

**Beatrice Hall's statement on freedom of speech, is almost universally admired but rarely practiced ... so what's wrong with criticizing it? If everyone had the right to decide what causes they would fight for, the elite might find it more difficult to field armies!**

**Ben was a Freemason, as were George Washington, Paul Revere and many of the founding fathers. That's interesting but I wonder how many of our current leaders are Freemasons? It's more likely they're members of the CFR, Trilateral Commission, Bilderberg Group, Skull and Bones, or other modern incarnations of *secret societies*?**

**In elections, some people win and some loose... though an imperfect system, it's okay, unless the same people always win. When that happens, it reminds me of Franklins definition of insanity, "doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result!"**

**Okay...enough already!**



**Ground Zero 2002**

## **Bias**

**I've got opinions and admit some are biased and some are rash. With that in mind, the less I say the better and when drinking, I'm better off saying nada!**

**How can anybody have an unbiased perspective? Here we're, right smack in the middle of our own culture and lives. Until you leave your city or country and look at things from the point of view of others, walk in somebody else's Moccasins, so to speak, it's impossible to be objective about your own society... or anything else!**

**I'm reminded that the military protects my freedom and the right to speak my mind. In the next breath I'm advised to be careful what I say... isn't there something strange about that? Society encourages us to unconditionally praise the military but that's something quite different from freedom of speech. Our leaders and peers tell us what to be grateful for... but shouldn't we figure that out for ourselves. We're spoon fed the truth by the powerful who are as biased as anyone else... not surprisingly, their motives usually revolve around profit, ideology or religion.**

**"Bias and prejudice are attitudes to be kept in hand, not attitudes to be avoided"...Charles Curtis**

## **Bird World**

**"It is the beautiful bird which gets caged" ... Chinese Proverb**

**High in the Cottonwood tree, sits a Crow, atop the neighbors tree is another one. Spread across the *hood* they're like sentries scanning for food and predators. In turn they're scrutinized by the Grackles... which in turn are surveilled by Sparrows.**

**A dozen Grackles harass a hawk and I'd like a photo of the drama but as usual don't have my camera when I need it!**

Watching a hawk and a goose I wonder, if you went back 10,000 years, were our ancestors viewing similar scenes? If we went back millions of years, would the sky be filled with Pterodactyls?

Once in a blue moon (why are they so rare?) I see a hawk from the hot tub. Usually it's being harassed by the smaller birds but occasionally it has the advantage and goes on the attack. Mother Nature didn't design the hawk to out fly all the birds all time, just some of the birds some of the time!

I hear a flutter of wings and a Mourning Dove flies from our deck... I don't know where it's living, just where it's pooping and I don't like it one bit!

Even the birds are on welfare, cardinals and finches come to the hot tub and pester me for a hand out... they're as bad as our dogs!

A brilliant Cardinal is hopping around in the Pear tree... he looks at me and seems to ask, "why don't you fill the feeder anymore?"

The bird world is easier to observe than the fish world. You can look up and almost always see birds but to spot fish, you have to find water, locate the fish, hope for clarity and probably get your hair wet.

It's too windy and the one bird I see is struggling greatly... blown sideways it makes no progress at all!

"A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush" and "killing two birds with one stone" are self-explanatory expressions... the second requires a lucky shot, or very strong arm!

Perched on the house, I see a Robin and a Dove 10 feet from each other. Looking in opposite directions they seem to ignore each other. Perhaps they're lookouts in a symbiotic relationship.

Once again I see the hawk perched on the neighbor's roof. I don't know how he can hunt, there're so many eyes watching him! Robins, Doves, Crows, Grackles and Sparrows shriek when he moves ... even the Rabbits and Squirrels benefit from the early warning system.





**I can only imagine the wonders birds see in their travels! Not that it's wasted on them but I doubt they appreciate it like we would.**

**Despite their beauty and sweet songs I'm sick of birds... they poop everywhere and presently are making a mess of our roof. I think I'll go with butterflies, they're beautiful, twice as rare and soil nothing ...just wish we could hear their songs.**

**I see a lone goose flying towards the lake were the flock landed a couple minutes ago. It seems nervous, almost panicky as it seeks the security of its "gaggle."**

**"A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough without ever having felt sorry for itself" ... D.H. Lawrence**

## **Britain**

**"Britain's most useful role is somewhere between bee and dinosaur"...  
Harold Macmillan**

**A Brazilian company paid \$ 98 billion for a British company and India's Tata Motors purchased Jaguar and Land Rover for a mere \$ 2.8 billion. This tells me a couple of things, one we're in a "commodity bull" market and two, who would have expected Indians and Brazilians to buy up the Brits?**

**When dealing with the Brits, I'm amazed at their intelligence and business savvy. That doesn't mean they or anyone else should run the world since great powers are always primarily motivated by self-interest. Not to mention that when the powerful screw up it's usually someone else that pays. When discussing Brits, I'm really commenting on those from whence they came; Celts, Picts, Normans, Angles, Saxons and Romans and God knows who else!**

**How did *English* come up with the letter "W?" Did somebody come to work hung over and decide that coming up with a letter to follow "U", would simply be too much?**

**We're told our military protects us from countries that would destroy us if they could. No one's tried to do that since 1812 and then it was our good friends the Brits!**

**You've got to hand it to the British, though no longer a super power, they manage to keep up with the best of them when it comes to peddling and meddling.**

The caller said we should accept new government powers that infringe on personal liberty, unless we've *something to hide*. So mister caller, exactly what were our ancestors *hiding* from the British", when the Redcoats had the right to bust down their doors?

The British are incredible... but I give them only a "C." They'll probably disagree but weren't they and English *émigrés* the principal beneficiaries of the "great things" they did for their colonies?

The Brits have a world class military even if they aren't a super power *and* they have nukes. As the Spanish, Germans, Nazis, Argentina and Inigo Montoya found out, the Brits are not to be trifled with!

### Bugs

"One thing inventors can't seem to get the bugs out of is fresh paint"... Unknown.

I dropped a peanut and while picking it up noticed a bug, half the size of an ant scurrying away. It had almost been beaned ... can you imagine being killed by a peanut!

I'll have to accept that God made bugs for a reason and take no joy in killing them... I guess they're just here to *bug* us.

There's nothing like living in a farmhouse for acquiring a dislike for bugs. Aside from their pooping all over the porch, they also like to die in the bath tub. For a real treat, take a walk by the creek – if you're not saturated with bug spray they'll eat you alive!

I was walking through the backyard whistling a tune, when a bug flew right in my mouth... now that rascal had good aim! Another time, a huge bug committed suicide on my eyeball... I hate that!

Have you ever noticed that when you squish a spider its legs curl up?

I can't stand flies... can't they at least wait till we're dead to bug us? The "biting ones" seem especially intent on tormenting me, especially when I'm on a ladder and dare not swat at them.

They say that fish, like "structure", so sunken ships and reefs attract them. Insects also like structure and as I walk the *structure* they seek just happens to be my face☹

The conventional answer to "what goes on inside an ants head", isn't *thing*! But we could be wrong...considering their tiny brains they demonstrate a high degree of "intelligence", suggesting that instinct's an extremely powerful force.

Another thing I wouldn't want to be is a Ladybug, I just squashed one with a piece of dryer lint... what a way to go! In the fall, we're infested by the imported variety of these bugs...

"Don't be a spider", he warned the creepy looking thing... it turned out to be pine needles.

It's amazing how agile ants are when I try to squash them on the counter. When I turn on the light they scurry for cover with the skill of a pro running back... wow! Their skill is no surprise... when you're that small you'd better be good at running in circles and hiding under things. Despite their success in eluding me, our kitchen counter is still a dangerous place for Ants to be!

I was stung two or three times today by Wasps whose nest I accidentally disturbed. If insects are that territorial, why are we surprised that humans defend for their land to the bitter end?

After working in the yard I wash up and squeeze liquid soap on my hands. Several ants scurry for cover but I scoop them up and add them to the mix, producing an *abrasive cleaner*... it worked well but smelled like @&#\$\_!

It's Autumn and the yellow jackets seem almost tame, as they hang around the table like dogs waiting for scraps. They're unlikely to sting unless we do something foolish in their direction... which my flyswatter often does!

“Nothing personal”, he said as he squashed it, “but this is my house” and you’re a bug!

Funny how when on a ladder, the flies bite and harass me. They know that people on ladders can’t swat... so much for insects being dumb! I’m also amazed at how patient the wasps are as they crawl out of the attic and watch me paint the eaves. They line up in formation *eyeballing me* like the Colts offensive line. Eyes trained on me, they’re ready to penalize me with stings if I move “off sides.”

It's 80° and a fly's trying to get in the window. He looks like the biting variety and would surely drive me crazy. Out of boredom I play chicken, raising and lowering the window, offering it a chance to dart in and pester me -- "Street fighting Man's" on the box.

Have you ever had a Firefly hit your window while driving 80 miles an hour? This one glowed for 30 seconds then became a smudge. It reminds me of the saying, “sometimes you’re the windshield and sometimes you’re the bug.”

Flies... in the end they usually get and if they don’t, the worms do! Starting in September *our flies* become lethargic and are more tolerable. That’s precisely when the Yellow Jackets acquire a taste for *people* food and I become nostalgic for the flies!

Years ago, the kids wanted an ant farm but I didn’t buy it. We now have one in the wall and its inhabitants make regular forays into the kitchen. I feed them poison every day hoping they’ll feed it to the queen and her “babies” as the instructions claim. Unfortunately, new generations keep visiting like clock-work... they seem to thrive on the poison!

## Business

“To open a shop is easy, to keep it open is an art”... Chinese Proverb

**"We're too ugly to be cheerleaders for the market" Say the Fellas from "Fast Money." I don't know about that but they certainly have some good lines... dead cat bounce pushing on a string, fat finger mistake, best looking horse in the glue factory, wall of worry, skin in the game, bear trap and catching a falling knife. None of them agree on anything and no one knows what the heck's going on... maybe that's why they're such comedians!**



**Just as I'm getting sick of the Michael Jackson death investigation, a *certain* business show comes on and I realize the Jackson coverage wasn't so bad after all!**

**Business, busy, "busy man" -- businessman... hmmm.**

**The client commented that the figures in my report *seem skewed*, which was a nice way to say they stunk! Heck, I'm writing a market report, not painting the Sistine Chapel and just need to get the darn thing done! It's like flipping burgers or digging ditches... in other words it's a job. My goal's to offer decent value and not make anyone sick so theoretically they'll come back for more!**

Every now and then I make a completely unexpected sale... these are the proverbial manna from Heaven!

After 10 years, the ribbon on my typewriter's finally worn out but there's an ancient spare on the shelf. Since I hardly use the typewriter this ribbon should last till retirement!

Amazing how many experts claim they were the first to warn about the latest economic disaster... of course they make the claim *well* after the fact!

Business is good... I've got prospects and work -- but I can't become complacent or rest on my measly laurels... history shows things can turn sour in an instant!

With five reports due before our big vacation, it seemed there'd be no way to finish them all. Rightfully or not, the clients with the *squeakiest wheels* got their reports and the polite ones waited!

It's ironic that Britain and the US forced China and Japan to open their markets to international trade and now we have negative trade balances of hundreds of billions a year. Of course Wal-Mart stockholders might think that's okay, after all they've made out very well!

The Dow, S&P 500, NASDAQ and Wilshire really aren't good indicators of the economy. They may tell us how things are going for investors but say very little about how much is *trickling down* to Dick and Jane six pack.

Regarding the high price of oil, the pundit suggested raising margin requirements, as that would drive the *smaller* speculators out of the business... yeah, that's what we need, leave the whole thing to the big shots!

The cheerleaders keep *talking up the market*... after all, they say it's *largely psychological*. So are Ponzi schemes and we don't let those go unchallenged?

I drive by the house that I almost bought and see a young real estate investor outside, he's cutting his teeth on this old money pit... good luck buddy whoever you are!

Globalization? If nothing else, it's made rivals more dependent on each other; U.S.A., Russia, China, Japan, Germany, France and the UK... we're less likely to dump bombs, or bonds for that matter, when we're financially interdependent. Globalization also makes for cheap labor and greater mobility for money... all told it's great for the rich!

The wealthy are masters at relocating their businesses, homes and money wherever they get the best terms and protection *from* their workers. Ironically the current havens are former communist enemies like China and Vietnam. Of course their poor are still waiting for the benefits to "trickle down" to their mud huts and squalid tenements... patience my friends, patience.

When a man tells you "my word is my bond" or, "my handshake is all you need"... it usually means he's a shyster and doesn't want to put things on paper, legitimate businessmen put things in writing!

Business has picked up and I find myself in the predicament of busting my butt to get the job done. That way I can make more money, pay more taxes and satisfy all the other money *requests*. Instead of getting off the treadmill, the damn thing's speeding up!

A new business channel was launched because the owner thought a friendlier view of business should be offered to the American people. My question is, how much friendlier can it be than the other corporate owned business channels?

I stink at math but use a *spread sheet* that allows me to calculate faster than "Rain Man"... and it's a program most ten year olds can learn... brains are becoming as much a commodity as strong backs!

An acquaintance insists *the deck's stacked against him* and only manual labor, is *honest* work. If he'd kick his bad habits and use



his extraordinary brain he could escape the paycheck to paycheck existence he complains about!

By using one's head, instead of one's back or learning new skills, you can get ahead, but be prepared to be criticized by those too lazy to learn new things and there's a be-jillion people like that.

He's trying to sell water filtration systems... but the leads they give him are ridiculous. Some are on welfare and only interested in getting free coupons for listening to the pitch. He'll have to make a few sales the hard way before he gets the *good leads*, because the sales manager's priority is results! He has mouths, (or addictions) to feed and naturally gives the best leads to the best salesmen... that my friend is survival of the fittest!

Microsoft made a big deal about protecting its users search histories because they were *so concerned about our privacy*. That's got to be baloney, especially when every new MS operating system's more intrusive than the last. It's all about Mr. Gates making a few more billions than he already has!

“Drive thy business, let not that drive thee” ... Benjamin Franklin



**Lady Liberty**

### **Capitalism**

**“The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries.” ...Winston Churchill**

With capitalism, *if* you use your head you can *get ahead*, with communism, few get ahead, except party members. Under both systems lots of people are resentful of others... with capitalism you have the chance to turn that feeling into something *positive*... or at least get rich trying.

I don't see class warfare (yet), as much as I see antagonism towards those who are doing a little better than we're. Americans, it seems, want unbridled capitalism, thinking that someday they'll *benefit*, or at least their children will...

I'm not against capitalism but society needs to protect the average Joe from those who massively profit from things like the subprime mess. On the other extreme, there're unbridled moochers! Just as there're principled capitalists, there're principled freegans and there are scoundrels in both camps. Regardless of one's place in society, some contribute, some prey on others and most are somewhere in between... but we're not necessarily where we think we're.

From day one, capitalism was set up by the wealthy to help them preserve their wealth with gradual changes *enabling* them to become even wealthier. On the bright side, capitalism allows those who are willing to work hard join the ranks of the ownership class and anyone can participate to some degree. Those who never get anywhere, are usually people who'd rather not apply themselves, suffer from substance abuse or who think that crime pays.

“Capitalism is the astounding belief that the most wickedest of men will do the most wickedest of things for the greatest good of everyone.” ... John Maynard Keynes

### Children (young and old)

“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders but they have never failed to imitate them” ... James Arthur Baldwin

**Why do we seek gold when the real treasure is our children!**

**I love my relatives but don't want to be held hostage by them, or for that matter by my ancestors. Admittedly one of my priorities is the continuation of my humble blood line, not just for me but for those who came before me. This is scoffed at but for 99% of mankind's history, it was a respected point of view. It's only in the last fifty years that this has been deemed ridiculous, hateful and racist... thanks to our successful *re-education*!**

**I will always love my family, I will never give up on them but I will not always *support* them... so, let's talk about this last point. It has to do in part with the question of how far must a family go, if certain members can't seem to make their way in the world? It also has to do with basic world views of family members... when *worlds collide* it leads to problems but neither party should feel compelled to capitulate. It also is related to love, respect and admiration, I will always love you but respect and admiration may ebb and flow... do you feel that way too? When family members are addicts or mentally ill, it complicates things even more... perhaps society's resources should be redirected to help our afflicted, instead of meddling in the lives of people half way around the world.**

**On a related note, how can our children learn from experience, if they're not accountable for mistakes? This applies to adults as well but it's a major cause of children going astray.**

**Kids... it's nice that you want to make us proud of you but I hope you aspire to more than that.**

**When you walk through the *woods* of life, don't count on the person in front to hold the branches. Be prepared and your walk should be pleasant, be unprepared and you may not finish.**

**I want to be a good husband but I don't want *that* to be my only legacy... like Clifford I want to do "big things!"**

**Every family has a prodigal son or daughter... or in some cases, prodigal parent, sibling or cousin. The prodigal is simply the one**

that needs more help than the others... he or she is loved no less but often spoiled the most!

So what's worse... growing up to be a worker bee, or an army ant? In both cases, you're a tool to be used or dollar to be spent.

If my children are opposed to my beliefs, what should I do? I suggest allowing leeway and agreeing to respectfully disagree. Now in their twenties, the kids are still my top priority but I don't subscribe to the *wisdom* that they have to be a parents ultimate and sole priority... at least not when they're grown.

Our kids decided they wanted to do something worthwhile when they became young adults. Sonny wanted to be a Navy Seal and our daughter concentrated on missionary work... both were influenced by the world around them in their decisions... but as far as I can tell, not by me.

Relationships between fathers and sons are often strained, as either may think the other doesn't respect him. Sometimes it's true, sometimes it's false... hopefully it's not insurmountable.

Son, there will be fights enough without picking any... watch your back and as much as possible, be a man of peace!

The kids were home for one of their friend's weddings and it reminded me of the cycle of life. Now they've entered the marriage and having kids stage, like we were 25 years ago. We may be grandparents in the near future and our parents are now "enjoying" their golden years...

I joked that our kids are "Mamas kids", after all she's the one they call most often and have the longest conversations with. She disagreed but I think she was being nice and knows better! I shouldn't complain though, she's earned her *position*, she's kept up with their activities better and of course carried them for nine months. I've have had the opportunity to try and make them closer to me but I've floundered. Despite having a case of "Mama envy", I'm grateful for the relationships we have and pray it can get even better.

If you're going to question authorities, such as government, or religion, do it while you're young... otherwise, they'll just call you a grumpy old man!

I tend to smile easily and not as genuinely as I should but today the kids put real smiles on my face. Sonny's graduation and daughter's text messages did the trick!

They were talking about Sargent Shriver the other day and it made me wonder... why is it that boys are named; Sargent and Major but not higher or lower ranks -- what gives? Michael Jackson however named his son "Prince" and there's the artist, formerly known as Prince.

I can only *conditionally* recommended marriage to a young man, as it's the only game in town. For women, it wouldn't matter what I recommend and I think they invented it anyway. I could compile a list of pros and cons but as mentioned... it's the only game in town! Personally, there *may* be other *systems* I wouldn't mind exploring. The bottom line's being responsible for the children you parent and a good man to the women in your life.

"The 18-year-old girl had made a religion out of flirting", said the author and I wondered how short of wearing a *burqa* she could do otherwise? Beautiful girls are flirts without even trying! Perhaps they're hardwired to *show their wares*, just as young men show off theirs.

My kids tease me for telling so many "precautionary tales"... don't do that, or bad things will happen. They may not realize that unlike some guys, I haven't planted my seeds far and wide. Those guys, including the ones that depend on other tax payers to pay for their numerous offspring, may have it right. They're cool and they don't have to keep a sharp eye on their kids... after all, they're making new ones all the time!

There's no good excuse for lying... forget about "putting food on the table", or other rationales. Our kids look at our *walk* and our *talk* and if they don't see a match, we lose their respect and worse

than that, they might imitate us. You can blame me for being a bad example but using that as an excuse for making similar mistakes will get you no-where fast!

As you walk through this concrete jungle, bring pepper spray... there're lions and tigers and bears... oh my!

Next time you're ready to blame your teenager for loosing something, look around some more. Then you won't appear foolish when it's discovered you're the one who lost it in the first place!

My kids don't listen to anything I say... should I try reverse psychology, or just save my breath altogether?

Young people prefer hanging around people who don't *lecture* them, they seldom realize those people are doing their very best to influence them anyway!

My friend thinks young people should *enlist* in order to learn discipline and respect for authority... on the contrary, I think they should learn to question authority instead of automatically submitting.

My kids are annoyed when I *point things out* but I'm only doing what my parents did and what my kids will eventually do too. Admittedly, it's better to let them discover as much as possible on their own but there's nothing wrong with discouraging them from re-inventing the wheel. At least most parents are nice about it, which is more than you can say about the school of hard knocks!

If you want your children to learn how to solve problems, don't explain the obvious to them... figuring out easy things is the first step towards figuring out difficult things... let them do it themselves!

Children make the most honest observations... in fact, they seem to be born with Tourette's, only their upbringing *cures them*.

When talking to my kids (they call it lecturing), I never say the right thing, or what I mean to say... even when on the right track, I screw up the message!

Raising the kids I've made lots of mistakes. Fortunately they're resilient enough for me to be optimistic! There're things they still need to learn and things they should *unlearn*...

We've spoiled our kids a bit and wonder if they'll be able to function in *society*. Another guy *fathered* ten children with various women and walked away. His will survive with the taxpayers help...in evolutionary terms, he's kicked my ass!

If you want to be *compensated* like an adult, perform like one... that's life!

When you disregard your parents advice, it's not *just* theirs you're rejecting, it's also the advice of many people who came before them. Don't join the ranks of those who insist on learning everything the hard way!

Every day's a chance to *do one thing right*... a chance to "upset" the balance, in favor of improving your life... but part of youthful indiscretion, is automatically disregarding parental advice.

The kids and I are alike in some ways and different in others... one difference is I can't sleep and they can... boy can they sleep!

Most families have a prodigal son or daughter, who receives extra attention and assistance. Other siblings are likely to be jealous but their parent's goal is to successfully send *all* their children into the world prepared to support themselves.





San Francisco from Alcatraz Island  
(used with permission)

**Parents find it unfortunate but sometimes necessary to give more support to the prodigal son or daughter. This isn't so different from society's willingness to provide "special assistance" to members who have difficulty *making it* on their own. In both cases, the extra attention isn't a bad idea unless it is carried to extremes... which it often is!**

**Young people can't help but be pleased, when they're touted as "the future of our country." Don't forget you'll only be recognized as the *nations future* for a while so make the best of it. There's already a new generation nipping at your heels and blaming you for any predicaments they find themselves in.**

**"What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the law. They riot in the streets inflamed with wild notions. Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?"... Plato (2,400 years ago)**

**Looking at my daughter's, straightening and curling irons, I can't but think they look more like instruments of medieval torture, than beautification devices.**

It was New Year's Eve and the teenage girls and boys were outside in the hot tub. We looked in from time to time, as we didn't want there to be any hanky-panky. This despite rumors that the boys were "harmless." Regardless, you never know when someone might want to *try out their equipment*... even if they already know it works.

The morning after our daughter's *open house*, I had to re-hang the huge "Congratulations" banner on the garage door. Forgetting to photograph the banner would be a major failure on my part, it was important to document this memorable day. I wonder though.. how many years will it be before anyone looks at that photo again?

I'm showered, shaved and combed in ten minutes, since long ago I've reached the age where spending more time doesn't make me look better! My wife and daughter spend an hour accomplishing the same, their definition of *diminishing returns* is different than mine and their results are far more pleasing!

According to our daughter, I have a dino-phone, dino-cam and muffin top... none of which are anything to be proud of!

"I'll have to let my pudding chill", said my daughter. This from the same young lady I overheard talking on the phone about strawberries! How do words like pudding and strawberry come up, in normal conversation?

We dropped our daughter off at college today... she'll be a freshman and tomorrow our son leaves for Florida. As empty-nesters, will our lives revolve around things like watching the grass grow and keeping the plants alive through the long hot summer?

Fathers and sons - now that's a loaded relationship, filled with love, envy, jealousy, anger and other complicated emotions. What am I to do, give my son and my father money, or advice? Is it even possible for me to lead them to water, while I'm still *looking for the bridge*?

## Climate Change

**There's weather and there's climate...like the stock market, the trend can be your friend, or not.**

**I'm enjoying the heck out of this year's "global warming" winter -  
- but there could be hell to pay come summer when the hurricanes hit.**

**To reduce the effect of global warming and sea level rises... maybe we can figure out a way to move the ice caps into northern Canada and Siberia... creating enormous freshwater lakes in relatively unpopulated regions of the world. Those freshwater reservoirs would be a cash cow for the people of that area, as it could be piped anywhere in the world, specifically to desert regions that are lacking water. The trick would be figuring how to get it from the ice caps to the dry land of Canada and Siberia and how to contain it there in giant inland lakes. I hear there are companies already working on such things.**

**If glaciers typically run through valleys, why can't those valleys be dammed? They don't have to be concrete dams but why can't our "explosives experts" use their knowledge constructively? Of course it won't make a difference if Antarctica melts!**

**I believe man-made climate change is happening and that the trend is towards warming. As dire as global warming may be, it wouldn't be as catastrophic as a new Ice Age. Unfortunately according to some scientists that's what global warming could rapidly deliver.**

**Some say global warming is a religion and its adherents will consider you a heretic if you call it a fallacy. The same can be said of many things, including of course religion.**

**By insisting we have overpowered vehicles that consume twice the amount of gas as vehicles used in most other countries and having very little mass transit in 90% of the country, we're setting**

ourselves up for potential disaster. If you need a big truck fine, if you don't you might want to think twice before *investing* in one.

It seems many people would prefer to pass the problem of climate change to their grandchildren. "Let others deal with the possibility of rising sea levels" seems to be their attitude... after all driving gas guzzlers is "fun!"

Some say global warming is part of God's plan... which is no surprise when you hear it from someone who thinks there's no way he'll suffer negatively from it!

I think it's likely that human activities have caused climate change. Will global warming lead to horrible problems such as inundation of coastal areas, or will it lead to changes in ocean currents causing an even more devastating ice age? The effects are likely to be far reaching, most pronounced in certain regions and guess who will be impacted the most... that's right, the poor.

Should we continue ravaging our planet to make room for another billion humans? I love people but like the aliens say, "if you've seen one human you've seen them all..." Meanwhile, there's only one Earth, most of us have seen very little of it and soon that might be impossible.

"Whiskeys for drinking and waters for fighting over"...Mark Twain. This in light of news that areas close to San Francisco, may face serious water shortages in the future due to global warming. As precipitation falls in the mountains as water instead of snow, there may be flooding instead of a gradually melting snow pack that has historically filled the reservoirs... but don't worry folks, Rupert Murdoch says climate change is a myth. If however climate change becomes *obvious* his network will change its tune but don't expect them to admit their mistake... as usual the spin will be "fair and balanced!"

It's likely climate change is occurring and people are the cause, *however* if the accuracy of hurricane predicting experts is any indication, the climate scientists could be wrong too!

**It's not surprising that wealthy Americans tend to be skeptical about global warming. Not only do they own the smoke stacks, they also expect their money to insulate them from any problems and they can always *head for the hills* if they have to?**

**The farther one lives from the ocean, the less likely he is to believe in climate change... even many coastal dwellers could care less, after all, major problems aren't likely to occur in their lifetimes.**

**Even where there is real suffering due to climate change, they tell us that humanity can adjust, make lemonade and find a silver lining. Isn't that what we've always done? The problem is *that* during previous climate change periods, there were *millions* of people inhabiting our planet, making migration possible... now there're 6 billion people and those with a decent real estate won't want to share it!**



Las Vegas

### Competition

**“Competition is a sin” ... John D. Rockefeller**

**If life's a competition, then we're all "winning" relative to some and losing relative to others. So who's the “Top Dog” in your neighborhood and which Jones' are you trying to keep up with?**

The post office is facing a lot of competition from UPS, FedEx and email, making the old adage about "neither rain nor Snow nor dead of night", ridiculous! Our letter carrier hasn't been here in three days... another venerable institution down the drain!

Was Hendrix the greatest guitarist, Ali the greatest boxer and Laver the greatest tennis player? It's impossible to compare masters from different eras. Style, nutrition, training and other things change over time. Even if they were to compete, one might be having a bad day... wait a minute, do the great ones have bad days?

We care greatly about winning, on an individual, team and societal basis. This leads to competition which is okay but also to conflict and violence which isn't. Are we, or should we emulate ants... and do they compete with each other and other colonies?

### Conflict and War

“Conflict is inevitable but combat is optional” ... Max Lucade

Really Max? Tell that to the guy who's being invaded!

It's amazing how often humans fight for turf... at its most basic, it's in an alley and street corners... at its extreme it escalates to unimaginable violence and atrocities.

The term “noble officer” may be related to the historic term “nobleman”, a title bestowed on those willing to do the king's dirty work ... some things never change! Many still believe that *murder for hire* is noble, if you're doing it to the right people and the *right* reasons.

The president said “my job is to protect you”...so why am I more afraid of the government than anyone else?

“The purpose of the military is to kill people and break things”...  
Rush Limbaugh

I'm told the military guarantees peace and prosperity here and abroad. If so, it's too bad that doing so depends on bombing people into the Stone Age. I'm told it's necessary to kill *them*, till they surrender and submit to our will. If I mention that this is at odds with their religion, they say religion has nothing to do with it.

Ever notice how often treachery trumps brilliance... it seems to be *an unfortunate* fact of life.

Historically, warfare's provided the most reliable form of upward mobility... sadly the other avenues aren't nearly as effective!

Is war a terrible "mechanism" for controlling overpopulation? Maybe so because there's always a shortage of good real estate and too many people itching to fight for it.

Instead of addressing root problems, we like to declare war on things like drugs, poverty and terror. Maybe the next war will be against streets and highways after all they're responsible for a lot of deaths.

"Don't just stand there - kill something!"... Water World

The Vikings were ferocious warriors but they *exported* most of their crazies centuries ago. The Scandinavian countries are currently prosperous welfare states and I wonder if that's how we'll end up? I doubt it and as for the "Berserkers" amongst us, they'll continue seeking new ground upon which to wreak their havoc.

I've been hearing the terms *permanent war* and it reminds me of our Indian wars, which lasted hundreds of years. It makes me wonder how long this latest *holy* war between the Christianity and Islam will last?

Apparently New Guineans are just quaint primitives minding their own business... and of course they have no WMDs. There is no *outrage* at their strange customs and behavior, instead many think they are noble savages or just plain funny. This despite their



custom of trading their women for baskets and pigs... but we've *civilized* them quite a bit, at least they rarely eat people anymore.

Then there're the wars in the Congo, the genocide in Rwanda, etc., we decried the violence but did nothing to save lives. Oil and religion seem to be the common denominator in determining who we *liberate* and who we ignore.

Liberation is almost always a bloody affair with no guarantees except death for some and profit for others.

You want third world countries to advance? Why not stop selling them sophisticated weapons? Aren't they likely to kill fewer of each other with stones and machetes than with bombs and missiles... unfortunately they're *pretty good* with those too.

"We're still cavemen...there has been no evolution"... unknown

If we're going to spend trillions of dollars, let it be on cures for cancer, heart disease, diabetes, paralysis, etc., not on bombs and bail outs.

If you choose to be at peace with the world, does it mean surrendering... and if so, to whom?

The difference between Americans and people "across the pond", is that they know they were governed by despotic royal houses. We haven't figured out that it's the same here as it was there. The titles, lines of succession and ruling houses may differ but everything else is the same... if not worse.

Seems that scarce resources are the root of most wars... although, ideology, religion and at least one beautiful face launched a thousand ships.

I'm a bit tribal, so when it comes to fighting for something, I want to be in on the decision and not just cannon fodder for some Wall Street prince, captain of industry or "decider-in-chief."

Microsoft has released Halo Three, a hugely successful video game... to me it's just another stinking war game.

The "boys" may end up having two choices... join the "home guard" (like in the Civil War) and put their neighbors in the "camps", or end up there themselves. I'm not optimistic about the choice they'll make... after all, *a jobs a job* – right?

The vets say *only they* know the "truth" about war, implying no one else should critique or offer an opinion on the subject but I respectfully disagree. It's like *not having to be hit by a bus to know you don't want to be* and I'm comfortable stating that war is *way* overused. Soldiers also have as much of a vested interest in promoting the rightness of their world view as anyone who's expended blood, guts or treasure in any endeavor be it war, theology, business, ideology or politics.

If you demand unconditional surrender from others, be prepared for a taste of your own medicine. If you impose your will on others, be prepared for those you've conquered to plot your demise and to attack your lofty perch. Are we really so perfect as to decide *weighty matters* for others when our own nation is arguably a moral quagmire? Standing up for our rights and values shouldn't include destruction on the scale in which we've inflicted it.

Wouldn't it be nice if now and then a few soldiers would beat their swords into plowshares? It would be even nicer if it became a *movement*... "what if someone gave a war and no one came?"

Time Magazine's cover on June 5, 2008 is old news, "The Military's Secret Weapon...Antidepressants." Drugs have been used to *stoke* and then ease soldiers since time immemorial; it's always been a link in the chain of profiteering.

Be it Andersonville, Guantanamo, Baghram or Abu Graif -- when one group is given unlimited power over another, abuse and eventually atrocities occur. Honest Lincoln wanted to treat confederate prisoners of war in the north as traitors but relented

and allowed them the honor of being POWs when it was realized the south would give northern prisoners *equal rights*.

I meet lots of people who say they hate war but they love the uniforms, pomp and weapons....

Apparently humans must have armies and police, otherwise the likelihood of anarchy would be very high. Unfortunately, unlike Wolves where a rogue pack leader is capable of only limited mayhem, while rogue humans routinely commit moral outrages.

"Military solution"... may be an oxymoron but around here chalking up another victory is more important than solving underlying problems... we care more about the win/loss column than the number of bombs we toss column.

On one day in World War I, 20,000 French troops died trying to move the line several yards... I can't think of any possible way this could be justified but *someone* found a way.

Historically people have died of disease, famine and violence and if *overly traumatized* by each death, they'd be unable to function. Even today, we care less about people dying when they are outside of our immediate circle of loved ones and friends.

You know there's going to be a war, when *even* the vegetarians are screaming for blood...

It's not just that we fight un-necessary wars, we also meddle so much that we find ourselves in the position of *having to go to war*.

Regarding bombing, we seem to do it as if it were a sport. Between drones, cruise missiles, bomber jets and other ordinance, the joy stick boys love playing the violent video games they grew up on... only now they're taking real lives.

Everyone's "encouraged" to play a role in the war effort, we need; soldiers, generals, engineer, doctors, nurses, businessmen, musicians and shoppers! As long as you fit in some where you are useful... if not *forget about it!*

We're moving 30,000 more troops into the war zone, along with thousands of what the lawyers call "enablers." I thought you weren't supposed to enable people to kill people but I was wrong.

"It's a shame", they say but "war *is* necessary"... but is it *as* necessary as they tell us? We buy war games for the kids, vote for war and have few reservations about its *necessity*. Is it hard wiring, or indoctrination that leads us to accept violence as the only way to achieve our goals? Will people ever learn there's more than one way to skin a cat, including when it comes to war!

We devise war contingencies against numerous countries but how many have attacked us? Only Britain, Japan and Al Qaeda have done so, yet we've bombed dozens of countries. We're reminded that thousands of American's have died defending our freedom and that of other countries and I don't dispute that, but we've also taken millions of lives in the process. Apparently our *excellent kill ratio* is immaterial or something to be proud of. If you're into "kill ratios" I guess it's nice to have a *favorable* one but it would be much nicer not to require such a benchmark at all.

Pacifist? I wouldn't mind being one but to this day its rarely been a rational choice.

While putting things away, I bump my elbow on the door and my head on the shelf, which makes me think, everything around here is too small. Maybe that's why people are always fighting over land and property, it's expensive to legitimately acquire land in order to build things bigger. It's expensive to put a roof over your head and the bigger the roof, the more you have to spend... no wonder people opt for *alternative* means of acquisition.

America's increasingly using drones to target its enemies, which saves American lives but kills innocents on the other side. Military lawyers have decided it's okay and *we the people* seem to have few qualms either. After all they say, drones save American lives and these weapons will never be used against us... or will they?

**What is it that makes one country invade another? Is it greed or need and is it greed of the entire country or mostly the elite profiteers?**

**If war is about old men and women talking and young men and women dying, who's responsible for the carnage... is it the old men and women who send them or the young people who are so willing to kill each other?**

**If we tell children to keep their hands to themselves, shouldn't the same apply to countries?**

**"It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war isn't thing but an act of murder." -- Albert Einstein**

### **Conforming**

**"The unexamined life isn't worth living"... Socrates at his trial for heresy**

**Do the people who love brand name athletic shoes know, or care that the shoes are made in poor countries, sometimes by veritable child slaves? Many Americans who are proud of their basketball shoes are themselves the descendants of slaves. Do our children even care, or is conforming and looking hip all that matters?**

**You can conform a little, or you can conform a lot... either way there's a price to pay. If you're a great leader, others will conform to you but that's not without cost either. Humans can exhibit robotic behavior, in the same manner as ants and bees... it's called mob mentality. We have a million years of evolution as well as conditioning, socialization and genetics that seem impossible to overcome. We do what humans have always done; fight, love and everything else necessary for survival and in the end we die... just like people have done since the beginning of time!**

**It was back in 2006, the subways lights went off and I saw something new ... the riders' faces were eerily illuminated, like when you hold a flashlight under your chin. In this case, it was I-**

Phones and Blackberries... the gamers and talkers went about their business as if nothing unusual had happened! Now a few years later the scene is common place but that day it was something new.

“Become one of us, by becoming none of us”... advertisement

### Conspicuous consumption

“A Big Mac - the communion wafer of consumption”... John Ralston Saul

When we're not busy buying new stuff, we're busy throwing out old stuff to make room for things *we need so bad!*

I get some satisfaction out of being frugal, *waste not, want not* and all that. Things are changing but frugality's still somewhat un-cool in our consumption based society. I wonder if attitudes will change if we run out of cheap energy and people have to walk everywhere? Till then conspicuous consumption and wastefulness will remain our religion... and that's plain stupid!



American Pickers at 1211 6th Ave.

Via education, tax codes, news, entertainment etc., we've all become part of the mega ship and if it sinks, we're *set up* to go down with it. That's why Americans we'll fight tooth and nail to preserve this *wonderful* materialistic system.

Who came up with the line, "you don't own your stuff, your stuff owns you." Like the bow and arrow, it's been around in one form or another since antiquity.

Consumerism makes us shallow and empty, even as it speeds up environmental degradation. If we can slow the rate of population growth and mindless consumption, we'll be improving the lives of future generations. We don't need ZPG but manic consumption's no good either. The flip side is that people in poor countries might want to think twice before having numerous children, unless they have better plans for how to support them...sorry, that's another thing I'm not supposed to say.

My daughter's T-shirt says "what you wear matters." So... some genius is getting free advertising and teaching her what's *important* in life! Madison Avenue's marketers and social engineers are guiding us toward the outcome they desire and we're falling for it hook, line and sinker!

I wouldn't be against social engineering if it was beneficial to more people but I suspect such an outcome would be impossible for anyone to orchestrate.

I did my best at the outlet store to be; pleasant, attentive and involved. We left after 15 or 20 minutes and my wife said, "that didn't take long did it?" It really didn't but I had a knot in my stomach that persisted till we reached the parking lot. Inside, Christmas music played in fast tempo and seemed to fuel a shopping frenzy... like chumming the water does for sharks!

I have nothing against "stuff" but I'm getting tired of feeling like a Hamster on a treadmill... if others want "stuff" let *them* work for it!

Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving is when retailers hope to get *in the black* for the year. Through commercials they tell us what we need to buy in order to be "happy." When and how did this shopping religion get started? Is it as old as time, or a more recent development?

I cruise through the mall like someone on a sociology field trip and must admit the women are amazing! Shopping seems as engrained in their DNA as girl watching is in ours! Enjoying the sights I walk past the cookie, pretzel and chocolate stores but *score* no free samples... I have to remember, this isn't Costco. But have no fear... the food court is sure to offer a sample or two! I proceed to a counter and sure enough toothpicks of Orange Chicken and other tasty treats are free for the asking!



I try not to be a *sample hog*, or stare too much and I don't mean at the chicken... but the usual *distractions* are everywhere. I ask for a sample at the first counter then move on to the competition for a taste of Bourbon Chicken. Without warning, a chair crashes to the floor, piloted by a little boy... his mother tenderly picks him up soothes his hurt body... these ladies are incredible!

It's amazing how much energy is spent figuring out how to pay for the *stuff* that will be next year's garbage! If we retooled our minds we could spend our energy on things other than this vicious cycle of production and consumption. We could work on getting along with each other, identifying similarities, instead of differences and learn to build bridges, instead of blowing them up.

How you take care of your "things", determines if ownership will merely be taxing or will break you instead. *Things* can be a burden or beneficial a personal example is the telephone which can be useful or a royal pain in the neck.

As far as people being "overly" materialistic, I suppose that's a basic human character trait. Unless you're extremely *spiritual*, or hoping to accomplish something great, the goal in life for many people is simply to enjoy life while they can. I find that hard to criticize... who am I to argue against a strategy that been successful for thousands of years?

Spring has spring and conspicuous consumption is manifested by tons of mulch trucked in to our neighborhood. Those who spread the most mulch *win* and they watch with delight as their neighbors try in vain to keep up with them. We don't have to play this game but there's that peer pressure *thingy*... not to mention that mulch keeps down the weeds -- right!

I don't propose living like hermits but conspicuous consumption, presidential "orders" to shop and overemphasis on materialism is unhealthy. It's likely to lead to shortages and extinctions... our grand kids may never have the opportunity to see a Tiger or enjoy a California Roll made from real crab... heck that's already rare!

## Debt

**“Debt is the slavery of the free” ... Publilius Syrus**

**The more people there're with “nothing to lose” - huge debts, no confidence in social security, sub-prime mortgages, beater cars and dead end jobs... the more society is at risk!**

**The downside of *good* credit, is the temptation to accumulate more and more debt...**



**Some people need credit like they need a hole in the head... those with the worst credit ratings, are given the highest interest rates, setting them up for failure and a serious spanking! The banksters extend credit to people who can't handle a savings account, much less a credit card and they're constantly looking for new victims.**

**A friend said he doesn't need credit and that he can always “live like a Mexican.” Though not PC, I think that philosophy's fine if he emulates the “Mexicans” who are smart, industrious and *getting ahead*!**

**A friend is concerned about his credit and the bank calling 3 or 4 times a day to harass him, so I said “tell them to take a hike.” They'll be knocking on your door again in no time, after all their**

job's to extend credit, even to the over-extended... they need you more than you need them!

The Russians warn they'll have to respond to what they call an arms race initiated by the West. The US has spent 10 times more than any other nation on its military for years... largely funded with credit extended by the Chinese, one of the countries we're preparing to fight. The Russians couldn't match our spending but oil profits will allow them to increase spending, at a time when the US may be running low on easy "credit." Will the rest of the world continue to buy our debt forever or will the bill *come due*?

The debt market allows people to buy things they can't afford, makes a few people filthy rich and allows the nations that controlling the banking system to finance wars more *efficiently* than nations blacklisted by the bankers... is this good, sadly ironic, or just sad?

"He that dies pays all debts" ... William Shakespeare

## Democracy

"A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine" ... Thomas Jefferson

Democracy? I like the theory but not necessarily the practice. People are squeezed for their rights and the fruits of their labor. Eventually in any human conceived system, the majority and the rich impose their will on the rest of society. Is it possible that the *means* isn't as important as the *ends*... with that being the preservation of our right to; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The founding fathers got a few things wrong but the assertion that people have certain inalienable rights was no mistake!

I've read that the founding fathers were for liberty more than for democracy... hmmm.

We should have constitutionally guaranteed human, civil and economic rights...not entitlements. Whatever form of government best guarantees and protects those rights, is the one I'm for. If it's democracy fine, if it's something else, then so be it .

Our democracy appears to be less grass-roots inspired and more lobbyist driven and special interest controlled. Democracy at its best is an excellent form of government but in practice it's rarely excellent and never perfect.

Democrats *tax-and-spend*, Republicans *borrow and spend*... neither bodes well for our grandchildren.

As far as democracy being superior, didn't Hitler use and abuse it in his rise to power? After his failed attempt to take over the government by force, didn't he run for office and win enough seats in the German government to become *der Führer*? Arguably the democratic process actually facilitated the mad man's rule!

Reportedly there are sixteen *intelligence agencies* in the U.S. some of which have the *authority and means* to permanently take out *troublemakers*! Their powers of surveillance, through the IRS, drones, cameras and God knows what else would make Joseph Stalin green with something other than decay.

Democracy *may* be the best system of government but it's still administered and controlled by people, so its imperfect and getting more so all the time! Admittedly or not, we vote based on self-interest and against that of our rivals. We know that with enough people *on our side*, we can make our lives more comfortable by taking from others and borrowing from future generations!

If there're not irrevocable guarantees of individual freedom and rights, then what good is democracy? If the majority, can usurp the minority's rights, then what's the use? In the final analysis, the weak are always susceptible to tyranny by the numerous and the powerful.

If and when the barbarians arrive at our gates, our "liberal democracy" may take a sharp turn to the right. That's when the

powerful, will *spend* us like dollars and use the populace for cannon fodder. They know it takes force to keep the common man *in line*, so be prepared to see our constitutional guarantees *sprout wings* and you know what that means.

Democracy isn't nonsense, it's wonderful unless it's corrupted by banksters, corporations, or anyone else, the problem is, that's what's happening... again!

I prefer democracy but like anything else, it shouldn't be above criticism, because it's definitely not above reproach. Democracy is imperfect and at times, a *strongman* is preferable to a democracy controlled by special interests...

I respect democracy but don't trust politicians to *manage my life* any more than I trust organized religion to *save my soul*.

Who in their right mind would surrender control of their lives via the "democratic process" to other people? If you are one of the outnumbered minority – it's natural to struggle for control of your life. It may be "proper" to respect the majority's will -- but if doing so means surrendering your rights, then brother ye must resist!

Since I'm in the minority, I'm trying to fly below radar and stay out of the crosshairs of the majority!

It's been said before, the majority isn't always right... in fact it may be wrong most of the time!

We have a great political system in theory but in practice democracies tend to self-destruct. Various factions elect politicians whose goals are to be reelected and they'll grant the electorate unsustainable largesse and benefits to achieve that. Eventually the tax base erodes to the point where the nation's very survival is at risk!

Why should anyone be surprised that our democracy's in danger of failing... they usually do and we're doing nothing different than defunct free societies of the past.

**“Democracy... while it lasts is more bloody than either aristocracy or monarchy. Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There is never a democracy that did not commit suicide” ... John Adams**

## **Diversity?**

**“Variety is the spice of life”... American Proverb**

**The definition of diversity is a moving target, controlled by opinion makers and social engineers. What is the ideal goal of *diversity*? Is it best exemplified by people of different ethnicities living together, or by all these *peoples* blending together to make a single race? We’re encouraged to prefer the latter but once that’s achieved, will there be any *diversity* left?**

**We’re encouraged to believe that if we eventually look more alike, society will be more peaceful. Unfortunately, one need only look as far as Rwanda or Cambodia, to see that people who look alike, can still be quite keen on killing each other.**

**Guess I’m a bit tribe or clan oriented and that puts me at odds with the current trend of favoring the "global village."**

**If it comes down to my DNA disappearing completely, or surviving minimally inside another populations gene pool, I'd have to say, that's better than nothing... but it wouldn't be my first choice by any stretch! That’s a case of *if you can't beat them join them*.**

**I no more believe in master races than in chosen people... we’re all born equal and hopefully every blood line has equal value in the eyes of God. That being said, it’s up to each *blood line* to preserve it self... or perish. I don’t want mine to take over the world... I just want it to survive! Every bloodline is unique and worthy but if its members make no effort to preserve it, (consciously or otherwise) then ultimately it may fail. This is a disaster for the blood line but of no interest whatsoever to the competition!**

Personally, I like the diversity I see at this market, which includes beautiful children of many races, as well as mixed races. I hope the remaining human populations are preserved, which doesn't mean mixed race people shouldn't thrive as well...there's room for everyone!

The government shouldn't have an agenda regarding race, other than promoting peace and prosperity. If it is determined to racially re-engineer society, it is exceeding its authority.

If a group of people is being out-competed and feels threatened with extinction, they're unlikely to *play fair*. Those who are *losing* may consider the stakes too high to be *good sports*, it will become a case of all is fair in love and war.

Not that it matters to most people but we're not all one *race*... we're all one *species*. At this point in time however, it's politically incorrect to mention this fact.

Why are there so many people with last names like; brown black and green but so few named after the primary colors; red yellow and blue?

There're *saints* and *mad dogs* among any ethnic group, no group stands out... the problem is when our saints are *mad dogs* too!

I need to balance my desire to *keep my genes in the pool*, with appreciation of the fact that the world will be just fine without them!

Consciously, or otherwise, most men want to spread their ideas and their seed... in the first case laziness prevents our success, in the second, laws and customs prevent it... often for the better!

Hearing someone's accent, even someone from a different region of the US, "tells us something" about that person... unfortunately more often than not it also tends to separates "us" from "them."

## Dogs (Mans Beast Friend!)

"Whoever said you can't buy happiness forgot little puppies"...  
Gene Hill

Our Boston Terrier is a perfect example of why you shouldn't buy a dog *just* for its markings. Our little buddy has little going for him other than his looks... and exhibits none of the outstanding traits our previous Boston had. That one was great, so the law of averages must have predicted this one would be a *whack job*. It doesn't mean I won't be a good owner... I just don't want to take that responsibility to the ends of the earth. Actually, I like him more all the time and someday he'll probably surprise me to the upside.

"Want a friend, get a dog", rings truer all the time... at least with a dog you have half a chance. All the dog wants is a bone and a good scratch. If you want an even truer friend they say "rescue a stray dog." Our dogs *seem* to be my friends, they wag their tails and seem uninterested in controlling my life me as some people... but they manage to anyway!

Fall's here, leaves are changing color, the temperature's dropping and I marvel at the beauty. Meanwhile, our Boston sits there and shivers... he has no idea that the Earth's farther from the sun in winter... all he knows is it's cold and that sucks!

It's nice having a smart dog, unless it uses its brains to drive you crazy, in which case I'd prefer a dumb one.

So who's the *Pavlov's dog*, me or him? When he hears me putting on shoes, he flips over and I automatically give him a tummy toe rub. Apparently I'm more "conditioned" than he is!

"In dog years I'm dead." - Unknown

The dogs are hungry, we go outside and I put chow in their bowl but they ignore it. I go inside and they follow me... what do they expect Filet Mignon?



It's a crime to put down a nuisance dog but *nuisance* people are bombed into extinction. I guess it's harder to find new homes for *bad* people than bad dogs... just by glad you're not on their list!

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks and you can't teach a dumb dog anything"... unknown.

I'd like to put the rabbits out of business... they eat more dog food than the dogs! The automatic feeder's visited nightly by every cottontail in the hood, resulting in fat bunnies and a doubling of our dog food bill. Leave it the dogs to find a solution... they're eating the rabbits!

Last month it was Cottonwood fluff, now the Chow's fur is messing up the deck. Despite repeated sweepings, fluff remains in nooks and crannies as if these spots were being sought out. The Chow fur also avoids the broom, seeking and sticking to splinters, wicker furniture and plastic chairs.

The *experts*, including veterinarians and dog food companies, advise us not to give leftovers to our dogs. That's to be expected, since they're both selling dog food. I can't think of a better way to spice up a dogs lives than giving them leftovers!

All you have to do is watch an episode of America's favorite home videos to see that dogs are born comedians!

Pavlov's discovery, that dogs are predictable *should* give us the edge in training them but they have an advantage... dogs have time on their side, after all very few have to work for living!

Why do they call it fixing a dog when you remove its nads? It seems to me that doesn't fix the pooch, it breaks it. Maybe they call it "fixing", because historically a dog that needed "fixing" wasn't much good to begin with!

It's weird but I think my dog winks ... but he does it with two eyes, not one.

**My dog's won every battle we've had so I'm moving to the dog house and giving her my bed, she'll settle for nothing less!**

**Humans are lucky to have this symbiotic relationship with the dog and they deserve credit for helping us get where we are today... at least to good places.**

**For thousands of years, dogs were primarily bred to *work* and the fact that they made good companions was a fringe benefit. However, if you expect your dog to do something useful instead of just being a pet (often a neurotic one), you're considered cruel -- what's with that?**

**If we could ask them, our dogs might say they want their remains properly "disposed of." Live dogs also deserve respect and while we're on the subject shouldn't we treat people at least as well?**

**Just wondering... does having a drink with your dog qualify as - not *drinking alone*?**

**We have real and implied contracts with customers, family, friends and even dogs. If we take care of them, they'll take care of us... theoretically that is.**

**Why are male dogs so horny? If you're around dogs enough, you see lots of hank panky. It's usually males haunching females but you also see the opposite. On the other hand you rarely see cats haunching at least I havn't. Maybe that's why we have expressions like "horn dog" and "doggy style" instead of similar cat analogies.**

**I brought the riblets home in a doggy bag but instead of dumping them I hurled them across the yard. There were about 30 and they spread in a wide arc... it's the closest thing to an Easter egg hunt these dogs will ever experience!**

**These dogs are no dummies and they have an exquisite sense of timing. Five minutes after I leave, our Boston pulls a cushion off the couch and makes himself comfortable. He waits just long**

enough to feel confident that we won't be coming back any time soon.

I take a letter out to the mailbox, the dog follows... and pees on the bush, mailbox and tree. Marking his territory is the most important things he'll do all day!

Even the dog ignores my commands...when I say "heel", she wanders off, when I finally give up and release her, she heels nicely. Maybe there's something wrong with my "delivery."

It's part of a dog's nature to probe for weaknesses. My dog was present when I removed the chicken wire protecting the spindles and two days later she started chewing through them to get on the deck... she saw the weakness and took advantage of the opportunity!

Our dogs respond better to grunts and other guttural sounds than to spoken commands. Heck the leader of the pack doesn't speak the Queen's English so when I growl, there's no need for an interpreter!

Took the dog for a walk off her leash the other day and the results were typical...she pooped on the neighbor's lawn then moseyed over to a dead possum and had a nice roll... yuck!

Experts say, if humans disappear, dogs would end up being something's lunch but cats would fare better. Does the "expert" realize that dogs form packs and that cats would end up on *their* plate? Eventually dogs would adapt themselves to their environment, lose the useless traits we've bred into them and probably do quite well. Instead of losing out to them, cats would be a big part of their diet!

I barely missed running over a three-legged dog as I rounded the curve. A week later I saw him there again... if Pavlov's right, this dog will either learn, or run out of legs!

I thought his pot roast farts were bad but they're nothing compared to the fumes emitted when I fed him Deer meat. It

stunk worse than Newark, NJ circa 1966...doggie, you're killing me!

Dogs are easy to please... all you have to do is let them *in or out* for them to feel like they're on vacation.

It's raining outside and I could sure use a Collie to herd my dogs outside-- in bad weather they won't go out unless I force them to!

"The dog is a gentleman; I hope to go to his heaven, not man's"...  
Mark Twain

"If dogs could talk it would take a lot of the fun out of owning one" - Andy Rooney

### Dreams

"I woke up in between, memory and a dream"... Tom Petty

As I age, life's mostly about memories but I remember when it was about hopes and dreams.

Not only do the words dreaming and scheming rhyme... there also a more serious connection.

"Dream no small dreams for they have no power to move the hearts of men" ... Goethe

### Driving

"Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?"... George Carlin

*Way back when*, a friend stated that if gas ever got too expensive for him, no one would be driving. I still think of that when fuel prices are on the rise... it was cocky and I wonder how he's doing now? I think he's still driving something big!



**Tea Party - Indianapolis**

**Pulling out of the lot I notice the ballet of cars and pedestrians moving as if choreographed. When everyone plays their part correctly, traffic moves like clock-work... even the Geese are learning the advantages of hustling across the road! When everyone obeys the rules and drives considerably, things go quite smoothly. Unfortunately, that's rarely the case... therefore we need traffic laws to cope.**

**It's rush hour and a vicious circle, someone pulls out in front of me, I honk and mutter an expletive. Moments later I'm *forced* to**

cut off another driver... I wonder if their response was kinder than mine!

Cars whiz by, trying to beat the red light...reminding me of Zebras trying to cross the Zambezi before the Crocs get them. At least here, *almost* everyone makes it home...there're a few fender benders but even slow pokes don't get eaten!

Visiting my *home town* I see luxury cars, Chocolate Labs that retrieve nothing but treats and overpriced real estate where the Wall Streeter's live. Having forgotten the local etiquette, I forget to yield to a Land Rover and almost get run over by its agitated drive...this is one high adrenalin town!

It started out innocently enough but turned into one of the worst traffic jams I'd ever seen. The cause of all the frustration was a few cones reducing three lanes to two and I wondered why do it in the middle of Chicago's rush hour?

A car blew by in the right hand lane but it immediately had to come to a screeching stop at the red light. Ha! I thought, hurry up and wait sucker! Then it occurred that he probably didn't mind the sudden stop. His satisfaction's not just from *getting there in a hurry*, it comes mostly from blowing past people and taking off like an Indy driver.

Ah...how I love the smooth asphalt instead of the concrete that lasts forever but drives like crap, especially when you're pulling a trailer.

You never get a red light when you need to look for *something* you dropped but when you don't need to stop, *every* light turns red!

My wife regularly washes her car while I wait for the rain. We were just wondering what gets more baths, my car or our dog... I think it's a tie.

Having been pulled over repeatedly, I know how the Zebra feels when it's ambushed by lions but on the plus side, I don't have to worry about the cops eating me☺.

A car speeds up on the right intending to pass before his lane ends... I slow down and he whizzes by. I'd rather have him in front than tailgating... once he's out of my hair we'll both be happy!

Driving home on the Kennedy a sign *reports* "46 minutes to downtown" and I wonder, *why won't they leave us alone?* It's bad enough we're in bumper to bumper traffic, they're just rubbing it in! On the other hand, a "positive" thing about the recession is that bumper to bumper isn't as bad as it used to be... instead of going three miles an hour, now we're doing 10!

Some leave early and some leave late which helps explain tailgating and road rage. We're the *tailgater* when we're late and the *tailgated* when we're early.

Funny how we think *we're* good drivers and we're critical of everyone else... except our favorite race car driver.

We live in a fantasy world... whether it's the guy in the BMW, the guy on a Harley, or the *guy* in Air Force One. We all have grandiose dreams, ... it's what separates us from the apes!

Is the console in your car like the junk drawer in your kitchen? Mine contains everything imaginable but I can never find *anything* when I need it!

Looking up at the approaching storm, I smile and think, "I'm going to make it" but Mother Nature has something else in mind! The only good thing about driving through storms, is leaving them behind... although you never know how long that peaceful feeling will last.

It's a shame that we fear being pulled over even though we can spot cops in the mirror a mile away. We may be swift but we're no match for the Lions in ambush with their radar guns and tickets in hand!

We're masters of rationalization... if someone's on my tail I complain loudly but when *I* tailgate, it's because *he's* driving too slow!

As gasoline prices rise, I notice more people running red lights, guess the less you idle, the less you burn!

There's something in our psyche that wants us to be "better" than other people. When I drive my Hyundai everyone acts like they deserve the right of way... after all, I'm in a cheap car!

When you're behind a slowpoke maybe there's a good reason for it. Usually it's an oldster or a youngster behind the wheel and that put the onus on us not to be jerks. The problem is they're *just driving*, while we're *going somewhere* -- it's a perennial conflict of interest.

I'm late it's foggy and I'm driving too fast, yet I know I don't want my epitaph to be, "he always arrived on time... except once."

Chill out... the car tailgating you might be doing it cause he's being pressured by an even bigger jerk.

Another example of hierarchy and dominance, is *the action* at four way stops. When arriving simultaneously, men often *take the initiative* and whiz past women. Chivalry be damned, guys feel we have more important things to do! When two people of the same sex arrive at the stop simultaneously, the one with the faster or more expensive car feels entitled to go first.

I'm getting used to my new car but haven't figured out where to put things and my phone keeps flying through the air! If dashboards were standardized, you could drive any car and easily find; lights, cruise, stereo and wipers. Imagine if steering wheels, brakes and gas pedals were placed as randomly as these are!



I pass the possum that was run over last week... it's kind of like an old friend, as I've seen it twenty times. Come on crows, it's your job to clean up this mess! The poor baby that crawled out of her pouch is now just a smudge... if I had a shovel I'd clean them up myself.

I saw a bumper sticker the other day saying "I hope that God isn't too picky." I like that better than, "in case of rapture this car will be unoccupied"... that may be just a tad presumptuous.

Wait in line at the four way stop on the way to drop the kids off at school, I see frazzled parents, kids combing their hair, CD holders on sun visors and babies in child seats... it's a veritable microcosm of society!

"You never really learn to swear until you learn to drive"...  
Author Unknown

### Drugs (and Alcohol)

"An intelligent man is sometimes forced to be drunk to spend time with his fools"... Ernest Hemingway

Most of us are exposed to drugs and alcohol and we're influenced by the people that use them. Is it controversial to say there will be negative consequences, if you're influenced by the *wrong* people? If you swallow the line that "real men" get drunk and act stupid, you are likely to get in trouble... so please don't ask society to bail you out when it happens.

I've met alcoholics who're in denial, because they don't drink alone. They forget to mention that you can always find someone to drink with, just go to a bar! Actually, they'll drink alone if they have to but since misery loves company, they work very hard to get others drunk too!

That pot which you say sets you free, is more likely to make you its prisoner. If you've smoked pot, you've already accrued any

possible *benefits*... all that's left are; damaged lungs, memory loss and lack of motivation!

Thanks for the invitation but getting wasted is counterproductive, not just for young people but also for people with more “serious” responsibilities... find reasons not to get wasted, not the other way around.

Often, an addiction simply has to run its course... with time alone revealing whether the addict recovers. Meanwhile life consists of wasted years or decades...the turning point, if there is one, comes when the addict becomes severely ill, or realizes he won't live long enough to see his kids grow up etc.

I have nothing against having a good time, which in my opinion can include drinking. Unfortunately, at many a party, drunkenness is the host and his friend stupidity is there with bells on. When it comes to drugs, alcohol or even food, less is better!

The path of least resistance eventually leads to a tough row to hoe... so don't be a punk get off the junk!

It's okay to have friends who drink too much, unless they harass you for not overindulging with them. If they demand that you go down the same road, if their misery demands your company, its time to find new friends. They can join you in drinking less and you should encourage them but if you can't lead them to water, ultimately it's their problem, not yours.

There're many *down sides* to excessive drinking, for example, you're shrinking brain cells and bloating fat cells!

Don't mistake misery loving company with generosity on the part of somebody offering you a drink or smoke... they're creating an obligation, in hopes that you'll buy the next round, even if you're not into it... it's a scam my friend, a scam.

Some people should never touch alcohol, because of the negative effect it has on them and others. Others have no problem drinking responsibly but there is a *poison* for everyone. When you discover

**your poison, never touch it again, because it's too strong and you like it too much! Despite thinking my poison was liberating and giving me *insights*, I was wrong... I wrote no more and no better with, than without it... which I'm told isn't saying much☺**

**The bad news for the millions of pot smokers, is that it's an addiction... the good news is, it's primarily psychological not physical, making it a little easier to quit – wish I could say the same for tobacco.**

**Nothing would make me happier than to see the CEOs of tobacco companies *strung up*... what misery their poison has caused!**

**The woman in your life wants to be your only intoxicant... no wonder she hates it when you smoke!**

**People with addictions, either chose that way of life, or have been hardwired in that direction. We can succumb to the wiring, or strive to rise above it.**

**When it comes to; drugs, alcohol, over eating etc., you can let your friends drag you down, or encourage them to follow you to higher ground... what will you do?**

**Even if addicts work, they will not escape the cycle of poverty, as long as they're paying black-market prices for their “fixes.” Since they're jailed for *using drugs*, instead of for committing *regular* crimes, our prisons are overflowing and we're not making a dent in this vicious cycle. If we don't realize that altering one's consciousness is something humans have done since the beginning of time and that people always will, we'll never get see an end to this ridiculous “war on drugs.”**

**And as long one part of the population, persecutes the other part for using “illegal” drugs, while they use “legal” drugs, we'll remain in this hypocritical morass .**

**Drugs...where does the tendency or propensity towards substance-abuse comes in? From a biological or evolutionary standpoint, does it serve any purpose... is it always counterproductive or can**

it be productive? If it's always counterproductive, why do we do it... is it a way of weeding out certain genetic "lines."

Who's in an altered state, them or me? If everyone I know is on some kind of mind altering or mood changing prescription or street drug, are they normal? Am I the one who's abnormal? Makes me think of that Jim Morrison line, "...and all the children are insane..." If the parents are addicted to licit or illicit drugs, what does that make the kids? To add fuel to the fire, many children are medicated from early on...Ritalin, Adderall and the flavors of the month!

The body and mind are designed to deal with a great deal of stress but we've been sold the premise that we should relinquish our coping skills and depend on pharmaceuticals. Of course there're cases where drugs are useful or essential but *wonder drugs* and other less than wonder drugs are over-prescribed on a massive scale... all in the name of the almighty dollar!

We're surrounded by poisons (funny how the words poison and passion are similar) and these poisons are many people's passion. They include; alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, sugar and fat, all of which are as destructive as polluted air and water. Eventually something will *get us* but why make it so easy for *the reaper*?

Saw a *non-narcotic* sleeping pill commercial with a disclaimer stating that all sleeping aids have some risk of dependency. It ended with the offer of a free seven-day trial supply... probably just enough to get folks hooked!

Maybe pot's illegal, because unlike alcohol and tobacco, it's not consistent with the "American way." It tends to make users passive and question authority... exactly the opposite of what Uncle Sam wants!

If your priority is smoking dope, you'll probably find out why it's called that. Those who never *grow up* enough to quit, often end up with that word as their nick name.

Another obstacle to kicking the habit, is that pot tells you *everything's okay*. It whispers things like, *there's no reason to give up pot and join the rat race...* making it a little bit right and a whole lot wrong!

Who says they can't kick in your door at 3 am? If the police believe you have pot, they can. When interviewed, a former drug cop, said he routinely stopped cars with college stickers, as well as black and Hispanic drivers, because there was a "high probability" they would have of pot. He made bets with the agents he trained, that he could put someone in jail before the day was done and claims he never lost! When the cop started busting children of wealthy citizens, he got in trouble. He claims 750,000 Americans are busted for marijuana possession each year and now wishes he'd never participated in the pot war!

"Alcohol is necessary for a man so that he can have a good opinion of himself, undisturbed by the facts"... Finley Peter Dunne

## Economy

"The economy depends about as much on economists as the weather does on weather forecasters"... unknown

Those who hold the financial strings, want to increase the investor class so it will be large enough to withstand any onslaught by those who live in poverty. With wealth *and* poverty rising, guns everywhere and an economy that looks like a slow motion train wreck, we're indeed living in interesting times!

The Dow Jones is a measure of how the rich are doing and as usual, it shows that they're getting richer. The Wilshire, NASDAQ and S&P 500 are measures of how other segments of the investor class are doing but none accurately measure how the working class is doing...

Alan Greenspan used men's underwear as an economic indicator, because when times are tough, men hang on to their briefs till there's nothing left. My economic indicators are; is OJ tracking

down his memorabilia, how many credit card offers am I shredding, are the Somali pirates making money and can people still afford to buy mulch?

Is the economy a gigantic Ponzi scheme? Don't worry, our fearless leaders can always resort to a great war... it's the tested and true way of *saving* the economy!

If capitalism requires occasional recessions to "clean house" does freedom need occasional wars to maintain its vitality? Conversely, if putting off the inevitable recession can lead to a depression, does putting off the war lead to a worse cataclysm? Are freedom and the economy similar enough to our bodies that we should give them small doses of poison so they'll develop anti-bodies to the inevitable contagions?

I don't believe in trickle-down economics... the wealthy are too adapt at investing money solely for their advantage, leaving only scraps for others. Unfortunately, those at the bottom tend to squander any money they get their hands on... didn't Jesus say, "You will always have the poor with you."

It's the middle class, that's most likely to spend money so that it *trickles down*. As far as trickling up, that should be the least of society's concern... the rich will get their hands on it no matter what!

The numbers are staggering... we used to say, "Bill Gates could fix that with his money." Now his \$ 70 billion's just a drop in the bucket, when you consider the mess we're in... what comes after a trillion? It's a quadrillion and I'm wondering when we'll get used to hearing it bandied about.

My friends who are having a tough time are become increasingly socialist... anyone they consider prosperous, who is unwilling to "share" their good fortune is considered an enemy of the people... off with your head!

Passing the bailout was easy... all they had to do was promise the rich hundreds of billions and scare the working class out of their wits.

With trickle-down economics, prosperity supposedly seeps through the cracks but if you don't have a pot to pee in, it's hard to catch anything! Kind of like a rising tide raises all boats, unless yours has a hole in it.

I'm not as concerned about our form of government, as having one that guarantees our rights and care less about the kind of economic system, than with it maximizing opportunity and minimizing exploitation.

In the tradition of Lenin's, "taking from each according to his ability and giving to each according to their needs", they will impoverish and control us. Despite cloaking it in Robin Hood rhetoric about taking from the rich and giving to the poor, they have no right to steal from the taxpayers...obviously *power's* more important than rights.

I wonder if under socialism, even the kids become lazy and at what age do they realize there's no reason to work hard?

I'm optimistic about the future of the USA but not infinitely so. We may be able to solve our problems, or this could be a slow motion train wreck. If we can't solve them, then those who can't get out of the way are going to get hurt. When the train finally comes to stop, will the passengers be able to stagger away and make the best of things?

If there's going to be a train wreck, maybe the slow motion variety's the best kind to have. At least there's a little time to do something before it's too late. The nature of the wreck is also important... will we just grind to a halt, or are we heading for a cliff?

As I stroll our neighborhood, a few people look annoyed that I'm taking a walk while they're on they're going to work. Shouldn't I

be *buying* or *selling*, to help keep the economy humming? They seem to think that working from home doesn't count!

The economy, geopolitics ... *everything* seems to be moving slowly, inexorably - like the Titanic towards the iceberg. Some people want solutions, others say let's just get it over with!

Is there a difference between an excuse and an explanation? They both tend to be self-serving but is one less so than the other.

If and when Wall Street's *run* ends and the banksters finally bring down Main Street, will the shills who pushed the Ponzi scheme say they were just trying to keep the economy going, or will they say they always knew it was a house of cards? Either way, they'll probably be saying it from a safe distance and a "safe" haven.

If there aren't technical breakthroughs soon we could be in for a world of hurt. I'm not sure that conservation, or regulation can save us at this point, we could experience a meltdown of the environment and the economy... simultaneously.

Those who are doing lousy don't want to hear success stories from those who are doing well... keep it to yourself, anything else is seen as bragging!





## Elites

**“A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both”... Dwight David Eisenhower**

Being raised to *agree* instead of to *think*, isn'thing new. It's been going on since time immemorial – how else could the elite manage the masses so successfully?

I heard someone say that if voting really worked, it would be illegal and that may be accurate. The elite have no problem with the masses voting... after all, the will of the people has rarely been an obstacle to the plans of the rich.

Is it just me, or do many of the so called “rebels” out there, like rockers and rappers feed their audience pabulum while sucking on the corporate teat? They are tools of the establishment, saying nothing new and accumulating wealth, so they can *join the club*.

Nations are like cults... newcomers are supposed to assimilate, embrace the popular mythology and leave their *tired old values* at the border. Nations seek to instill a *common vision* in all citizens but it's a vision devised by those who are the wealthiest... and determined to stay that way!

Are you part of the economic elite, or part of the proletariat? It depends on who you ask... your workers say yes and your boss says no.

### Environment

“Waste is a design flaw”... Kate Krebs. In nature, nothing is wasted.

Strange how hurricane Katrina, one of the new breed of super hurricanes, severely damaged the oil and gasoline refining infrastructure. *She* almost seemed to target the industries causing climate change... Will we heed the *warning*?

Environmental degradation is due to man's desire for sex and woman's desire for shoes...this may sound ridiculous but could it hold a kernel of truth?

I'm wondering if all these *hands-free* devices waste more than they save? There's a learning curve, so eventually they should save water, paper towels and soap but I'm not buying the statistics. I wave my hand in front of all three soap dispensers, so at least one will work! It's even harder to get rinse water and I have to jump back and forth between the faucets!

Some people are anti-environmental, believing environmentalism is counter to *manifest destiny*. Our last president championed consumption, because he claimed it would create jobs. Frugality has been made to sound unpatriotic, do you remember being told to fight terrorism by "going out to shop!"

If this planet isn't warming, I'll eat my hat - just look at the melting ice caps and our warming weather. The only hope we've, is that the climate scientists, are as imperfect as the weatherman? If the meteorologist on TV can't accurately project today's weather, then maybe climate scientists are inept too.

We should encourage renewable energy, recycling and energy conservation... these technologies may not be essential on earth for a hundred years but they'll be essential in space from day one.

Society's incapable of stopping on a dime and changing course towards a green future, which according to climate scientists means we may face a catastrophe. Some say global warming will lead to a change in the Gulf Stream, which could result in an ice age instead of global warming. Wouldn't it be ironic if everything evens out and things turn out all right... let's not hold our breath, it's better to tackle climate with everything at our disposal.

The price of gas is "reasonable" again, at least for some, so the sales of hybrids is down and SUVs up. After all, we've the right to drive whatever we want as long as we can afford it... I don't disagree *in principle* but wonder how much longer this will prevail?

Another reason the rich "don't think" global warming is true, is they need more time to unload their beach front properties on "greater fools."

The weatherman described the breaking of the Wilkins ice shelf in Antarctica but was careful not to mention climate change. As an employee of the corporate media, that would be a *mistake*. The best he could muster was, “it’s a complex system, that’s for sure.”

Instead of government censorship, America’s subject to self-censorship... we’ve learned to keep our mouths shut about controversial subjects. Some things are better left unsaid, especially when your paycheck depends on it!

Corporations and politicians tell us we can’t enact tougher environmental laws, or the economy will lose thousands of jobs. On the flip side, the countries with stricter environmental laws seem to be doing quite well!

“I can remember when the air was clean and sex was dirty”...  
George Burns

## Experience

“God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas but for scars”...Elbert Hubbard

How, will you learn from experience, if you’re not accountable for your mistakes?

My friends want me to invest money in their ideas but I’d rather give them advice... you can imagine how that’s been received!

You can see everything traumatic that happens as a downer, or you can learn from such experiences.

While walking the hood, a Cottontail whizzes past me. I've seen him acting recklessly like this before and it threatens his very survival. Maybe that's why rabbits have short tails -- if you're constantly chased, you don't want a long one... deer are like that too☺

**If you think you've got life all figure out... you've figure wrong!**

**"Life is the art of drawing without an eraser" ...John Gardner**

### **Family and Relatives**

**"Families are like fudge - mostly sweet with a few nuts"...**  
**Unknown**

**Wonderful moments last only as long as our memories, which don't last forever, so pass those good times on to others!**

**When you say something terrible, the words can't be taken back, or forgotten. If we're on the receiving side, we should realize that hurtful things are usually blurted out in anger and haste - so try to forgive.**

**Why do our lives *so often* revolve around buying ourselves and supplying others with meaningless baubles?**

**Did *we* create this mess or was it our parents and grandparents? It's hard to find anybody who blames themselves but we keep leaving the next generation with an even bigger one!**

**When friends or relatives come to visit my wife wants everything perfect, making these occasions good opportunities for deep cleaning. On the other hand if we make things too comfortable we could end up with new roommates! It's nice to be gracious but if hosting's a competition, I'd prefer to lose!**

**There're people here who believe in keeping ones' nose to the grindstone... especially mine!**

**Funny how some relatives and ancestors are held up as heroes worthy of respect and others are pointed to as examples of *what not to do*. I doubt it's that simple... none of them were perfect and none were total *screw ups*... were they?**

Despite your protests to the contrary I've yet to meet anyone whose views aren't based on self-serving rationalizations! On some level, life's a great big grab... why not strive to do better?

We all have overbearing relatives... I hope I don't follow in the footsteps of the ones I know!

"No one notices what I do around here, until I stop doing it"... unknown.

I think men want grand-kids as much as women, we just want them for different reasons. It has to do with women having no vested interest in the continuation of "the line" as the men are. Women don't seem to care as much about the family name being perpetuated either... after all, in most cultures it's the man's name that lives on.

We should master our neuroses and not expect others to enable, or subsidize our compulsions. As families we have to help each other and put up with a bit of neurotic behavior... but we shouldn't be held hostage! Similarly, society should extend assistance to those who need it and like any *family*, those who foot the bill must not be held hostage by gamers.

My dad didn't teach us how to play ball or fight... which caused a problem or two along the way. On the other hand, he taught us that knowledge is power and to be open minded... for these things I'm eternally grateful, if not always comfortable with the results!

I've pointed out the obvious to my children and that didn't help them think for themselves. I'm trying to keep my mouth shut and let them figure things out for themselves. They don't want my advice anyway but as a parent sometimes I can't resist!

Jealousy and avarice is common among relatives and friends. Admittedly or not we're trying to "win the contest" and end up with the most toys and largest bank account balance when we die... how silly is that!

**I've noticed that my son and my father are similar...they both do the opposite of what I want!**

**Our loved ones are the most important things in our lives. They *usually* don't ask for much... and mostly just want to stay in touch. If they do ask for too much -- we have the option of saying no. We're not responsible for making family members lives "easy", just easier.**

**Social Security's a *throw-back* and a way for workers to indirectly support elderly or infirm relatives who can't work. In the old days, families directly took care of grandparents and other relatives. Now we pay a tax so the government can provide for the elderly, disabled and lazy. The able bodied and sound of mind still pay for the security of their relatives!**

**Sometimes I say "don't blame yourself", when my loved ones have problems, so I shouldn't be surprised when they finally take a piece of my and blame me instead!**

**Kids... please don't expect others to "look out" for you... it won't happen. People've been messing with each other since time immemorial and it's unlikely to change any time soon. When you walk through the woods of life, catch the branches cause no one else will!**

**"Other things may change us but we start and end with the family"... Anthony Brandt**



**Sherman, IND General Store**

### Food and Drink

“Americans have more food to eat than any other people and more diets to keep them from eating it”... unknown



**We like our beef, chicken and fish wrapped in plastic... no fur, feathers, scales or bones please! We don't want to think about how they got there, or the inhumane factory farms.**

**You tell me not to eat meat and to treat the animals as equals but if you re-engineer the Lion to lay down with the Lamb, is it still a Lion?**

**If it's wrong to eat meat, why do we have teeth specifically designed for that purpose? We're omnivores plain and simple, meant to eat both vegetables and meat. Some say, the mind is mightier than the mouth and we should feed ourselves without killing animals. That's fine by all means, use your brains - I'll use my teeth!**

**Many people disdain hunters, even as they feast on beef or poultry raised and butchered solely for our consumption. Is the quality of life better in the feed yard than in the forest? Of course not! In the wild, animals live as they always have, avoiding predators... as long as they can.**

**Why should I feel bad about eating fish, fowl or meat ... they're part of the food chain and so are we. If they aren't eaten, they'll end up maggot and worm food... as will we. From the lowliest parasite, to the POTUS, our mortal remains share the same fate!**

**For thousands of years, men have brought home the bacon and women have prepared it. I think women considered it a privilege to put the food on the table. Even as men garnered sexual favors for supplying the meat, women bartered food preparation for influence and protection. In the process, men have been well fed... in many cases too well fed, "eat everything on your plate!" they say. The resulting obesity is our own fault, since no one holds a gun to our head and forces us to eat every last bite.**

**Once again I over did it, in fact I way over did it but at least I didn't way, way overdo it... thank goodness for small favors!**

**My wife has contaminated the trail mix with almonds! I don't mean to complain but the original trail mix was much better than**

this adulterated concoction. Almonds are fine with chocolate... but when added to a delicacy like trail mix, they just water it down.

We all embrace different technologies and while my friends were learning to TIVO their favorite shows, I was perfecting the art of defrosting cake in the microwave and my waistline shows it.

Didn't Marie Antoinette say, "let them eat cake?" I'm confused because cake is good. I wouldn't have beheaded the queen, I'd have voted her a second term!

Okay...I had a stupid breakfast, so I'll try to have a smart lunch.

I'm over 50 and have eaten a burger a week my entire life, that's 2,500 hamburgers... which is more than enough. I won't stop eating them but will try and slow down. Drinkers and smokers might look at things the same way. How many times have you partaken and do you *really* benefit? Less is better my friend!

Losing weight is so difficult because of cravings we must *satisfy*. We try to "fool" our body with artificial sweeteners, pills and carrots but fat cells are smarter than brain cells. In order to lose weight it's helpful to tap into the mind, body connection. It's not a complex equation but one that must be understood to solve the riddle... good luck!

Weight loss involves challenges like; portion control, calorie reduction, delayed gratification and exercise. Many of us are hard wired against all these, so success requires a huge but worthwhile effort!

Greenpeace does its best to prevent the Japanese from catching whales... but I don't see them protesting the millions of cows we slaughter. Whales are more intelligent than cows but if they're like our beloved Dolphins, then they can also be very nasty. The French eat horses and many nationalities eat dogs, so why isn't Greenpeace harassing them? I like whales but don't think we should force our culinary values on others, especially when we eat more meat per capita than just about anyone. If the whaling nations are managing that resource wisely I don't think it's our

business, any more than what we do to cows would be the business of India... which as far as I can tell isn't harassing us for eating their sacred animal.

I think my wife has hidden the Christmas cookies. She trying to do me a favor but I usually find something even worse to eat and lots of it! Today I only looked briefly, before giving up, so this time she really did do me a favor!

I complained about the oatmeal raisin cookies our neighbor brought over, "why would anyone ruin a perfectly good cookie by adding raisins?" A week later when the *good treats* ran out, oatmeal raisin sounded pretty good!

Does anybody else think that chocolate makes all nuts equal? I'd rather eat Cashews than Peanuts but when both are dipped even Cashews lose their advantage!

I slice a piece of cake, put it on my plate and walk towards the couch, trying not to eat till I sit down... if I'm not careful it will be gone before I even get there!

One of the greatest inventions of Western civilization is Coffee Mate... I'm not kidding, even though according to both my wife and mother it's terrible stuff!

There's more peanut butter floating around our kitchen than a kindergarten class but I'm not complaining, after all it's what my baby likes!

I'm a connoisseur but I do like my wine bottle to have a real cork... screw tops, fake corks and boxes have no panache.

There's good coffee and there's bad, there's also cheap and expensive and while there's not a direct correlation, cost is a pretty good indicator.

"Once, during Prohibition, I was forced to live for days on nothing but food and water"... W. C. Fields

I've got the luckiest stomach in the world, it gets whatever it wants!

Come on Vlasic...if I can't open your jar, how am I going to eat your pickles...today, you've lost out to a bag of chips!

“Vegetables are a must on a diet. I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread and pumpkin pie”...Jim Davis

### Freedom and Free Speech

“No one is free, even the birds are chained to the sky” ... Bob Dylan

Freedom of speech, comes with an asterisk and while several points of view are tolerated, stray beyond and you'll suffer repercussions.

Everyone should have a *voice* and use it to speak their mind... even if we don't change the world, there's nothing wrong with trying.

If we're going to have freedom, we're also going to have stupidity but what deserves protection is freedom, not stupidity. Some people celebrate the right to party as a cornerstone of freedom as in the Beasties Boy's "You've got to fight for your right to party!" Alcoholism is common where freedom of speech isn't guaranteed and booze is often the one "gift" given to *subjects* by dictators. Drunkenness keeps people's minds off of other things but America was not founded to protect it. We shouldn't confuse the freedom to be stupid with the larger meaning of free speech.

It's important not to just criticize other governments but also our own, we must have the right to do both.

My immediate family knows my views and they're relatively tolerant – but I still walk on eggshells, especially regarding *certain* issues. Society's boundaries are so well-defined, that to stay on good terms I must hold my tongue ... even with family!

Freedom of speech is the people's most powerful right, followed by the right to maintain it through any means necessary. That's why the powerful will not allow the people the right to bear the kinds of arms necessary to maintain their freedom. They allow ownership of weapons suitable for killing each other but not for facing down the government.

Free people need iron clad constitutional guarantees *at least as much* as they need elections. Our rights were won by a revolution, not by an election. Elections have robbed Americans of more rights than foreign enemies ever could, we may need another one to win them back!

Should we be able to choose whose *free speech* we want to defend... or must we defend the rights everyone, no matter how onerous we consider their agendas?

I don't think *this group or that group* needs to be crushed but some may need to be resisted, so that others aren't crushed if they gain power.

I don't think this government will fall anytime soon but the notion of *liberty* could. Our government may do to us what the British couldn't... demote us from citizens to subject. Not surprisingly the lazy will be pleased, because the property of hard working people will be given to them. After taking our liberty, the government won't even have to *give us death*... the fear of prison will be sufficient to keep most of us in line.

There're influential people around, intent on forcing their views on the rest of us, so resist, think for yourself and if necessary follow the path of most resistance!

When we were young, we were told we should grow up to *speak our minds*. Later some learned that it only applies if *our minds* concur with the minds of the people in charge. Like children, we're to be "seen and not heard", unless our opinions are in the acceptable range and *synchronized* with our leaders.

**You have to be willing to fight to protect your God given right to; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. If not, there will always be someone ready to take your precious freedoms away in the name of one damned thing or another.**

**On such a crowded planet, can we afford to let individuals act in their own “best interest?” I don’t know but the government seems to be making that more difficult all the time.**

**We have free speech but not enough of it to say what I’d like to say about certain powerful people. There’s never completely free speech and there’re always mechanisms in place to *encourage* us not to criticize our fearless leaders.**

**Freedom of speech is strongest when a society’s stable and the status quo isn’t threatened. The true test is retaining it when the powerful feel threatened by criticism. Eventually the First Amendment will be put to the test and we’ll see if our handlers want us to be free, or bond.**

**“Take away the right to say “fuck” and you take away the right to say “fuck the government”... Lenny Bruce**

### **Freedom of Association**

**There should be no state sponsored discrimination but if individuals are not allowed to make decisions regarding who they’ll live with or among, then we’ve lost another fundamental right... freedom of association.**

**It’s insane when someone else decides, who you should associate with, whose club you can join, who’s you can’t and who you must invite to your party. We’re not there yet but they’re working on it!**

**If you want to associate with all of the people all the time – great! If you want to associate with some of the people, some of the time – great! I believe you should have the right to do this... however “Big Brother” begs to differ.**

There're certainly many people who will not want to associate with me... and that's their privilege and their right☺

### Friends and Neighbors

“One's friends are that part of the human race with which one can be human” ... George Santayana

Friends sometimes treat you bad and vice versa, because relationships are like the weather. Occasionally friends feud, due to politics, religion or whatever and then we end up doing rotten things. If possible, persevere... as long as the *nonsense* is an aberration and not a pattern.

The same applies to relatives, if there is a pattern of crummy treatment, then even if you can't pick your relatives, at least pick the times and places you interact. If they straighten out great, if they don't, give them just *the time of day*. After all, if you are not demanding of them, they have no right to make demands of you. It's not that we have no obligations, it's just that our genuine obligations should be more limited than those that friends and relatives try to foist on you.

Sometimes I think there're only two options when it comes to friends... lousy, or none at all! That's exaggerating and I guess my expectations are a bit too high.



**Indianapolis, IN**

**Some people need a lot of friends, some just need one or two... but when even those are fickle, who can you turn to?**

**My neighbors are like neighbors anywhere -- as long as I don't rock their boat, they're unlikely to rock mine.**

**If you take me for a fool and treat me like one, does that mean that I'm one? If I keep *letting* you treat me that way, then most likely I'm.**



When it comes to buddies, strike a balance between holding on to their friendship, treating them right, keeping in touch and “moving on”, if they crap on you. Treat people with respect, insist on the same, do no harm, watch your backside and keep on truckin!

I backed out of the garage and stopped in the driveway to put on my gloves... meanwhile my neighbor walked back from his mailbox, a third neighbor pulled into his driveway, raised the garage door remotely and drove in. Although we get along fine, on this occasion not one of us acknowledged the others in any way. In a well-coordinated orchestra, the three of us ignored each other completely! It's a busy afternoon and we have *lots to do* but a friendly hello would have been a nice... guess I should've got the ball rolling!

Despite *occasional* anger, jealousy or whatever, I want my friends to prosper. Heck, that way they're happier with me, their mental health is better and since most of them are armed to the teeth, less likely to do something stupid.

“True friends stab you in the front”... Oscar Wilde

One reason we don't have many *friends for life*, is that unlike relatives we can choose our friends. It's easier to discard friends who aren't "working out" then it is to get rid of relatives. We should however be slow in discarding friends, as they're not as easy to replace as we think. Despite their foibles, friends may be irreplaceable. Another thing about friendship, is the mystery of attraction...as with the music we like it's a *chemical reaction*.

At this point, my wife is my best friend, followed by my children, other family members and a couple of guys I've known a long time. She's like my good friends of old, kind, moderate and unlikely to stab me in the back. So things really aren't much different than they were 40 years ago when I had one best friend and a few good ones.

The flip side of losing all of your friends for speaking your mind, is that you have the opportunity to make new friends who might accept you in spite of your views... good luck with that!

A friend took us out on his boat this weekend... another took us on his last month so I've had enough for a while. I'd rather *have* friends with boats than *have* one myself... there're only a few things I really need and a boat ain't one of them!

Most of what my friend and I do is competitive... whether it's debating politics and religion, or playing basketball in the old days. The one non-competitive thing we did was, was smoke the *peace* pipe... and we've'n't done *that* in years.

I was trying to broker a deal that could make me rich... and I wondered, should I mention it to my friends? "No" came the answer that would lead to jealousy and outstretched hands. Keep such information to yourself, it will get out soon enough anyway! It also *sounds* better if you're not the one spreading the news and either way it'll result in problems!

Funny how people remember *everything*... at least if it's something that can embarrass me. Anything good I do is quickly forgotten!

The problem with not having very many friends, is you have to handle the ones you have with kid gloves and that's not where you want to be.

Friends aren't free... they come with a cost, although true friends usually charge less.

Friends, relatives and lovers... we've had our share of bumps in the road and we'll continue to, although hopefully not as often as before. Ceasing to hit those bumps, would mean the relationship is over and I don't want that☺

The fellows called me a "woman" for not wanting to run amok at the party, and my wife was disappointed that I didn't "stand up to them more vigorously... I call it getting it from both sides!

**It's starting to dawn on me, if you don't agree with your friends, eventually and almost inevitably, they stop being friends. This is a very sad observation because God knows we need friends!**

**I don't wish ill on my friends but have to admit *occasionally* hoping they don't get to far "ahead" of me, which is selfish and counter-productive. When they're "ahead" they seem to like me better and when I'm "ahead", they're jealous! It's in our own self-interest, for our friends to do well financially and emotionally. Among other reasons for wishing friends well, we're so interdependent, that it makes no sense to hope others fail.**

**Is it ironic that the things ruining our friendship now are the things that led to our friendship in the beginning. I admired my friends character and he seemed to appreciate mine. Unfortunately we now resent each other because of those same qualities!**

**Got a call from an old friend around Christmas... guess it's part of the holiday spirit to reconnect. I called him last year at about the same time. After missing his call, I jotted down a note to call him but misspelled his name... that shows how long it's been since we've talked!**

**"I get by with a little help from my friends"... John Lennon**

### **Genius and Stupidity**

**"Everyone has a right to be stupid; some people just abuse the privilege"... unknown**

**Have you seen the Wizard of Oz? If nothing else, a diploma is proof you've persevered and without one, people may take you less seriously. A degree doesn't prove you're smart, it just shows that you persevered through various trials and tribulations. It may not be fair, since rich kids have fewer obstacles to overcome in obtaining degrees, than poor kids... but life isn't remotely fair anyway.**

“Rainman” can tell you the weather, or what happened on any day in history... but what good is that kind of genius? And what good was Einstein’s genius if it just gave us nukes? I guess it depends on if you’re the bomber or the bombee... Unlike Rainman, Einstein was apparently quite a ladies man and women love successful geniuses. Einstein applied his genius to real-life *situations* while savants like Rainman have no such capacity.

Intelligence and wisdom do not necessarily go hand-in-hand... doesn’t everyone know that.

I’m not saying you can’t *talk and think* at the same time but don’t we think more effectively when our lips aren’t flapping? Doesn’t it follow that those who talk constantly must spend less time thinking?

Ask an idiot a question and you’re likely to get an idiotic answer but even that can be enlightening... you can learn something from anyone, even if it’s what *not* to do.

"Live and learn from fools and from sages."... Aerosmith

Geniuses who reject the knowledge of others and insist on figuring everything out for themselves usually screw up. If they’d just *read the manual*, they’d benefit from the experience of its authors. Even if none of the authors were geniuses, their combined intellect is great! Geniuses rarely accomplish as much on their own as a team of "average" Joes!

Increasingly people believe that open-mindedness and doing their own “due diligence” is a waste of time. *Opinion makers* do their best to convince us that they have all the answers and that *intellect’s* a “four letter word.”

Some people are *gold mines* of information and it's too bad their brains can't be saved for posterity. The thing is, *artificial* memory’s a better storage medium than *grey matter* and if people would just record their wisdom it wouldn't be lost.

The flipside of a bunch of normal people being able to do more than a genius, is that geniuses occasionally accomplish more than teams of normal people... at least when they apply themselves to the full extent of his ability.

Short-term, people with *street smarts* prevail over people with higher IQs, because they *routinely* employ deception and treachery to get their way. In the long run, high IQ people prevail, as they organize and devise even greater treachery. If and when "geniuses" survive the initial onslaughts of thugs, they tend to wreak havoc on such predators.

The worst thing you can tell a prodigy is that he's a genius cause that's when they *take their foot off the gas*. It's a mistake to think that being a genius means, you have it made!

In the UK they have knighthoods, here we have and honorary degrees... there's little stead in either.

Don't use geniuses as role models, unless they're doing something useful. We've all met highly intelligent people who seem intent on pickling their brains, instead of using them. That's not what the creator intended... win, lose or draw, try to make a difference!

I may be stupid and a glutton for punishment but I'm trying not to be both simultaneously.

There's a niche for "crazy people" too... we can learn from them too. After all, who was the first people to harness fire? Who *foolishly* grabbed that burning stick and realized the flames potential? Was it a genius, or a crazy person... it could have been anyone!

I simply have an inquiring mind -- *simple* but inquiring.

The *nice* thing about people who talk too much, is that it's difficult to talk and think simultaneously. So let them blab all they want, that way they'll have less time to implement their schemes! When an idiot's lips are flapping, you can be sure they're conniving to pick your pocket, or meddle in some one else's life.

**"Imagination without execution is hallucination"... Albert Einstein**

### **Generation Gasp**

**“It's one of nature's way that we often feel closer to distant generations than to the generation immediately preceding us”...  
Igor Stravinsky**

**Show me a grown man or woman who doesn't try to influence young people and I'll show you a dolt. Every adult wants to pass their world view on to younger folks, whether they admit it, lie about it, or are oblivious to the fact. I'm not saying we want to take over the young minds we come in contact with but we have views and hope to *encourage* the next generation move in that direction.**

**There's always a pileup or two going on...generations, races, sexes...things are always colliding!**

**Different styles for each generation... why not? I'm watching baboons on TV and the fact they've changed very little in a million years explains why they haven't evolved into something more advanced. We on the other hand keep changing... for one generation its ear rings for men, for the next its nose rings for everyone. We're a dynamic and innovative species and squelching change leads to stagnation.**

**The fact that we complain about the “younger generation” may be one reason we *get old and die*. Eventually we've *had it* with young folks but can't change them – so why hang around?**

**Oldsters love telling youngsters how to do things, because they learned the hard way and want to spare them woe. Meanwhile, the younger generation prefers to learn the hard way... it's a family tradition! No matter how much we want to “inform” them, they rarely want our advice. Even when we briefly get their attention, they're immune to good advice but absorb the bad stuff like sponges! Maybe we should find some other way to justify our existence.**

When you dig yourself a hole, it's usually from following the advice of idiots and slackers. Haven't we joined in when hard-working people are ridiculed and haven't most of us been convinced seriousness is un-cool and cocky, disrespect, is cool?! It's a shame, because the advice successful people give isn't *just* theirs, it's the wisdom of generations of successful people!

These days you don't hear many protest songs... seems the corporate media has largely co-opted the latest generation of songwriters.

Every generation complains about those that come after them. Some of those from the great generation that fought World War II, are highly critical of the generations that succeeded them. Many of the loudest critics *didn't* actually serve and remind me of the current crop of chicken hawks, whose *bum knees* kept them out of Vietnam but have the most hawkish views of anyone.

"There was no respect for youth when I was young and now that I'm old, there is no respect for age - I missed it coming and going"  
... J.B. Priestly

### God and Religion

"You'll never win a argument over an emotional issue, using an intellectual argument"... Ed Rollins.

**Religion the last thing some would kill for and the first thing that would drive others to murder.**

I don't mean to disparage *sacred beliefs* but I admit to having many questions. I'm only skeptical of those who have all the answers and no questions of their own... that's a red flag. To me it makes no sense to believe a single *anything* all the time... so why would I believe that any single religious point of view is always right... especially when they all have tarnished track records?

Everyone I know claims to be doing a good work... frankly I'm not seeing it!

Funny how the *check list* of mandatory beliefs is short when you're being wooed but it gets longer after they've *won* you. That's when you find out you're a spiritual *baby* and can only advance by accepting an ever growing list of beliefs, talking points and positions.

We shouldn't use God's name in vain, it's not his fault we don't always watch where we're going and bump our heads...maybe he's trying to knock some sense into us!

Growing up Unitarian we felt isolated, there were no rituals or rites of passage. I admired kids who had confirmations, came to school with ashes on their heads and had lots of amigos. We were un-cool, no one had even heard of our church and I preferred not to talk about it, "you're a what?" they'd ask☺

"Do you know where you're going when you die?", they like to ask and it can drive them crazy if you're not panicked by their question. It's a valid question *and* a good way to scare people. If you don't react the way they want, they tend to be disappointed and occasionally angry. I'm not sure where I'll go, if anywhere but near death experiences described by people of *all* religions provide hope that there's something out there and maybe it's not the exclusive property just one religion.

"I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with sense, reason and intellect has intended us to forego their use"... Galileo Galilei.

Poor Galileo... who did he think he was and where did he get such crazy ideas! Galileo was found "vehemently suspect of heresy," Galileo was required to "abjure, curse and detest" his own ideas and then imprisoned, it was a sentence later changed to house arrest.

In 1992, Pope John Paul II expressed regret for how Galileo's case was handled. John Paul issued a declaration acknowledging the



errors committed by the Catholic church and in 2008 the Vatican proposed to complete its rehabilitation of Galileo by erecting a statue of him inside the Vatican walls! Somehow that statue was never erected.

Condemnation without investigation is the highest form of ignorance – Albert Einstein

Did Jesus spend his *missing years* in India? There *may* be some evidence but it's a divisive topic. At the *Sermon On The Mount*, Jesus preached the Golden Rule, which Buddha and others had preached many years earlier. Confucius is quoted as saying, "never impose on others what you would not choose for yourself"... hmm.

It's too bad Jesus wasn't *around* longer... maybe he'd have clarified a few things and taught us *how* to live in peace. Some Christians say *that's un-necessary and the Bible teach us everything we need to know*. I respectfully disagree and think we we're left with the Apostle Paul *and others* to interpret and fill in the blanks... and that's unsatisfactory for some people.

"The world is my country, all mankind are my brethren and to do good things is my religion" ... Thomas Paine

My daughter was discussing religion with someone the other day and it occurred that we've never *really* discussed the subject with each other. She's made a few religious remarks to me and vice versa but of the many serious conversations we've had about religion, none of them have been with each other. I should have encouraged that conversation from the beginning, instead of accepting the premise that what I had to say was likely to be wrong. That we've discussed religion so little isn't her problem or fault but I think it's a very sad thing.

Upon further reflection, I wonder if such a discussion would be productive, or would it lead to a distancing between us? I hope we could agree on some things and "agree to disagree" on others. That might be the case but *all things* considered, it would be difficult for either of us to make much *headway* vis-à-vis the other.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't discuss religion, we should but we should have realistic expectations regarding changing each other's views... I'd be satisfied to just reach a better understanding with each other.



Indiana

The steeple of the church represents something similar whether at a fundamentalist Christian church or a humanist Unitarian Church. In both cases the members aspire for something beyond this life and that something is popularly believed to exist *in the heavens*. Christians have been told exactly what to look forward to, while Unitarians are taught to be seekers.

He came back from church feeling unsettled and said, "I shouldn't feel this way." Why, I wondered should he feel *any* particular way? Unless you are being brainwashed, you have the right to feel any way you want.

What's more *subject* to Group Think, political or religious thought? I don't think it's even close, most religions leave little room for independent thinking.

God created the Tower of Babel to confuse men's tongues because they were getting too big for their britches... maybe it's time for him to do it again!

It may be 1,000 years before people discuss religion rationally... if ever! Not only are we hardwired to want *an afterlife*, we're also trained or wired to oppose anyone who challenges that hope.

I'm unaffiliated by choice but that doesn't mean I want to be. It just means I haven't found a religion or political party I want to join...someday I might.

People will go along with almost anything if their financial survival depends on it and that goes double if they're convinced their salvation depends on it. *Ipsa facto* we're motivated to do just about anything a powerful leader tells us to.

Are we any freer to question the church, then we were 200 years ago? We've made strides since the Inquisition but it's usually been at the rate of two steps forward one step back.

Call me naïve but I think the most important messages in the Bible are things like, "do unto others as you would have others do unto yourself" and "beat your swords into plowshares." Instead of following the good book's teachings on who's good and who's bad, I prefer its teachings on what's good and what's bad.

I've visited a number of churches with my wife, as *she* tries to find one acceptable to both of us. Last week it was an Apostolic church, which was about as satisfying as any of the others we've attended. I noticed only one blonde in the audience and wondered, are Apostolics unlikely to be of northern stock? Later my wife reminded me that they rarely color their hair... so that's what the other Churches would look like if the brunettes weren't all trying to "have more fun!"

Watching the show about the famous cave paintings in France, I speculated on why Europeans are a bit less religious than Americans. We have Indian artifacts, going back 12,000 years but they're not associated with Americans of European descent. I've heard some Christians say God created the world about 10,000 years ago, which might make Euros scratch their heads... after all, there's evidence in the caves that their ancestors were living on the same ground as them 50,000 years ago.

The scholar stated, "with *evidence* of two miracles, you can be canonized as a saint by the church." Maybe that's why I find it so hard to accept the Bible as the Gospel truth, there's too many human fingerprints on its pages!

We're told that God is jealous and like a husband or wife, he'll allow no one to usurp his place with his loved ones. That makes sense, even though you say *making sense* is somewhat irrelevant when it comes to God. You may be right but that doesn't make your understanding, or Paul's, or the Council of Nicea's any more authoritative... men and councils are imperfect, if not worse.

Why was Mary Magdalene largely expunged from the Bible? I doubt it's because she was irrelevant... perhaps she was too relevant!

When the rapture comes, will America, the *most* Christian nation on earth, be depopulated. Does that mean there will be plenty to go around for those who remain? I doubt it, since the good; doctors, nurses, pilots, police and military will *assumably* be raptured, leaving only bad ones to make a go of it...or to *go at it!* Will only bad cops, hack doctors, gang bangers and assorted *unbelievers* who didn't heed the church's call be left? That would be quite a predicament and a horrible time of tribulation indeed!

If I have doubts about parts of the Bible such as Noah's Ark etc., should that make me doubt the prophecies of; Daniel, Ezekiel, Jesus and others? Not necessarily but it does make me more likely to consider alternative interpretations.

Another *speculation* is that God is like the force in Star Wars, although I hope *He's* more personal than that. In any case I'm content to wonder and yes, *speculate* about God... that great and incomprehensible force.

We're told to think like children and that deviating from the Canon of the Bible is heresy. This has kept people in line and under the thumb of religious and princely *authorities* since day one... make that since before day one. The *Canon* is like a field piece designed to mow down they who dare question the *holy ones*. Canonization is just another tool to keep the herd moving down the chute... like lambs to the *you know what*.

Scientology is being attacked by the French government for defrauding the public. In the old days they'd be called heretics and burned at the stake, now their called fraudsters and their book stores closed!

Superhuman efforts *might* save us but supernatural efforts *will* save us... will ancient astronauts who may have visited us and been perceived as gods finish their lap around the Milky Way and return just *in the nick of time*?

As we drive I see billboards with messages like, "Hell is real" and "believe in Jesus or go to hell." I know these folks think they're doing us a favor but are they also trying to buy redemption?

I thank God at the dinner table when it's *my turn* pray, other times I thank him for the chime the car makes when I leave the headlights on, for when I remember something important, for not twisting my ankle while hiking the back forty, for not *quite* knocking that glass of beer over... and most of all for the kids!

Does God use scare tactics? Why not, after all this isn't a reasonable world, why would he rely on logic? Certainly those who claim to speak for him use scare tactics after all, nothing's quite so effective!

Just out of curiosity, what happened to the souls of cavemen? Reportedly they buried their dead, adorning them with flowers

and gifts. Even tens of thousands of years ago, humans believed, or at least wondered about an afterlife. Did our prehistoric ancestors have souls and if so, what happened to them?

"Oh when the Saints come marching in!" Can you imagine a dinner party attended by; Jesus, Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha, Moses and other holy men! Would they get along, or would there be a rumble in the jungle? Could they share a spot of tea or would things get heated? Would be gentlemen or demand reverence from each other? I'd like to believe they'd have a friendly exchange of *opinions*... but who knows!

"And when you asked for light, I set myself on fire"... Audioslave.

As in love and war, so it in religion - "all is fair." Religions and denominations divide the world between themselves and others... with those in the *other* category often destined for hell. Another similarity between war and religion are concepts like "divide and conquer" and "with us, or against us." These are useful in defeating enemies and winning converts but they're a sad commentary on the *humanity* of organized religion.

Religions teach that even *if* their members aren't *better* than non-believers, they're *better off*, which serves as a powerful recruiting tool. Reading between the lines, it seems to me they teach that their members are also *better* than the rest of humankind... and that attracts converts too!

We're reprimanded by the women for saying "oh my God!" instead of "my word", or "my gosh." I'd rather have an all-male worship service than conform to such conventions. Women like conformity and demand obedience to *tradition*... they want our spiritual lives to be as programed as a bee hive... what's with that?

The church sign said, "worry is interest paid on problems before they happen" and it makes sense but not perfectly. Can we really live like, the *birds of the air*, neither sowing, reaping, or gathering into barns? If so, will our heavenly Father feed us, or will we starve? There're already too many starving people and

freeloaders for that lifestyle to be encouraged! Certainly it's better not to worry *excessively* but it's also good to plan for the future.

Church?...I like the one with no walls and would rather listen to a red bird sing than a red face crowing!

Funny how everyone's for freedom of religion, as long as it's *their* religion that's free... everyone else's is a bit suspect.

"Lighthouses are more useful than churches"... Ben Franklin.

Regarding religion, they tell us to think like children and if we don't we're accused of *intellectualizing* spirituality. There may be times to think like children but most of the time we should think like adults *even* when it comes to religion.

Why should people of one religion "expect" those of another to believe their story and abandon their own spiritual traditions? If organized religions can't co-exist with a fair degree of respect for each other, we're in deep doo doo. The problem is history shows they've a heck of time even tolerating each other.

Lifetimes of indoctrination make it almost impossible for people to honestly consider that perhaps their religion isn't 100% correct, 100% of the time...

Churches are nice comfortable places to pray but I'm usually in a crawl space, or on a ladder when I feel the urge! Though not as dramatic as prayers from a foxhole, scary places are where much of my praying occurs. I'm trying to pray more for the needs of others... I wish I could say I've been more successful.

The sophisticated level of communication between human beings, has been a driving force in the advancement of religion. As the only species with thousands of years of complex verbal communication under our belts, we've been able to advance complex theories on the afterlife and the other great questions of mankind. When there's a disaster other species try to survive,

while we try to make sense of it, which often means attributing it to God's wrath.

Not surprisingly, the church was upset when Copernicus and Galileo proclaimed the earth was not the center of the universe. The church wanted everyone to believe the world revolves around us... or more specifically, around them. It only took a few hundred years for them to admit they were wrong!

Religions have been known to *misrepresent* facts for centuries but eventually make 180 degree turns, when their versions of reality finally prove to be untenable. All the while, the flock maintains its blind faith, after all, religion's the only business selling eternal life insurance.

Even those curious enough to question whether the Bible *is* the "gospel truth" are usually reluctant to do so. Why rock the boat? It's easier to go with the flow, than ask questions that get you in trouble. It's not just society that ostracizes you, it's also family and friends.

All those people out there working for the return of Jesus, or the return of the Mahdi both of which reportedly will be preceded by an apocalypse, may get their wish... after all they're working extremely hard for it!

Does God listen to the prayers of madmen and mass murderers? Can such people have a personal relationship with God? I'm told he does and they can... this thing gets curious-er and curious-er all the time.

Are we as individuals and as nations bound to reap what we sow? On the one hand I hope we do, on the other I hope we don't... I think we must, yet I pray we won't.

The Pope has declared two new sins, polluting the earth and being obscenely wealthy... right on! Just don't expect everyone to agree!



Hopefully, extremism and “final solutions” are prohibited by God... maybe that’s why grand alliances like the Allies in WWII often come together in the worst of times, to “save the day.” Will it happen one more time, multiple times, or never again?

It’s funny...we’re told not to feel sorry for ourselves, cause there’s always some poor bugger worse off than us. Even folks in the most dire-straits are told that and almost everyone can think of someone in worse shape than themselves. When such people die, we’re reminded that if they were *right with God* they’ve gone to a better place. Makes me think there’s always hope, or at least the chance of something better to look forward to.

No one is omnipotent and when you think of the sum of the wisdom of everyone who ever lived as being *the human knowledge base*, then even the greatest geniuses hold but a tiny fraction of that info. The fact that God lets us die and take what we know to the grave *indicates* that the universe doesn’t really need our *knowledge*.

Does God hear the agnostic’s or theist’s prayer? He’s omnipotent, so surely, he hears, but does he answer? If they pray I hope he answers.... Prayer, meditation, contemplation and hope... maybe they’re intertwined anyway.

“There’s a fine line between salvation and drinking poison in the jungle”... unknown.

### Government

“I don’t make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts” ...Will Rogers

I care less about the government’s form than about having our God given and constitutional rights preserved. The problem is, we can’t even agree on what *those rights* should be!

**I don't think the government can solve all our problems but if it can't even rein in Wall Street and protect us street thugs what good are they at all?**

**Being unaffiliated, I see government as a "racket" and necessary evil, not a benefactor to the people... that being said, anarchy is almost always worse.**

**If I can change the world for the better, great! If not, I'd just like to *survive* another administration.**

**It's bad enough when the government wants to dominate its own people but when it tries dominating the entire world, something's really wrong! Does our government really know what's best for us, much less for the entire world?**

**The ninth amendment states that rights not given specifically to the government are reserved for the individual, I like that... unfortunately big brother doesn't!**

**Dot your "I's" and cross your "T's" when dealing with the government... they make life difficult enough when you do and impossible when you don't.**

**I don't think this government is going to fall anytime soon but what might collapse is the concept of liberty. Our super state will do what the British and King George were unable to do... make us subjects instead of citizens. Remarkably, many would be pleased with that outcome as long as they're given enough bread and circus. After stealing our liberty, the government won't have to resort to *giving us death*... fear will be sufficient to keep most of us in line.**

**"The more corrupt the state, the more it legislates"... Tacitus**

### **Greed**

**"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed"... Gandhi**

**Just wondering... who's greedier, the rich who are glutens largely at their own expense, or certain bums who're glutens at the taxpayer's expense?**

**People are different from the beasts, because our hands and brains, allow us to impose our will on both nature and humanity. One powerful human can jolt millions with their malice, greed, malice *or*... their good will.**

**Envy, greed, jealousy and other negative traits seem hard wired in the primitive parts of our brains. It's difficult for the more advanced frontal lobe with it's reasoning, to override decisions made by the reptilian part. Our brain stem knows what has worked for millions of years and is unlikely to defer to the more civilized frontal lobe.**

**We're utterly self-centered and is upon examination it's apparent that even what we do for others is usually done for ourselves... but I digress.**

**Nature's way is cutthroat competition and for thousands of years that was also human-kinds way. Starting in ancient times and sputtering along until now, enlightened people have sought to create benevolent societies. This is wonderful but usually undermined by human greed. From the lazy who want a free ride, to the rich wanting to be richer, many a wrench gets tossed in the works.**

**Could there be a reason the words need and greed rhyme?**

**Despite being treated like little gods, doctors are among the biggest liars! After every surgery the doctor says "it couldn't have gone better" but each time it soon became apparent he was just covering his butt. Doctors are the same as mechanics, contractors and consultants except they get paid more and occasionally leave their *tools* inside us!**

**The day's not over but enough time has passed that I have to ask myself "where's the day gone and what've I accomplished?"**

Then, it occurs... why be so concerned about "accomplishing" something every day? Why can't we live like the birds and the deer... isn't there enough to satisfy our needs as long as we're not greedy? Uh, no... if we try living like the birds and the deer we could end up like them - eaten or smeared on the side of the road!

As the slow motion train wreck proceeds and our economy courts disaster it occurs that the geniuses on Wall Street have little wisdom, common sense or compassion. Superior intellect seems to have no correlation with doing good. The brainiacs who invented; sub-prime mortgages, hedge funds, derivatives and predatory lending are basically white collar criminals.

“There’re many things that we would throw away if we were not afraid that others might pick them up”... Oscar Wilde

### Green Acres!

Tromping around the farmyard collecting the branches that fall after every storm, I wonder... shouldn't I be writing a book or something?

Life is often a turf battle and whether it's over Jerusalem, or me and the bugs fighting over the porch, everybody wants prime real estate. Green Acres is beautiful but it's also the *ancestral home* of bugs, snakes and other nasty's.

As I walk the trail, a horsefly discovers my intrusion and attacks. There will be no peace until one of us is dead... if I had remembered the bug spray this wouldn't have to happen!

Whistling as I work, I hear the same tune coming from the woods and wonder if it's an echo, or my neighbor being funny. Eventually I realize it's a Mockingbird... I'd like to think its mimicry was a compliment... but that would be wishful thinking.

At first the flat tire appeared to be just debris to remove from the creek. Surprisingly however, the old radial turned out to be a useful tool. With it, I could float four stones at a time across the

creek, instead of precariously carrying one at a time. If it could float 100 pounds of stones it might also be a good life preserver, cause even a slight current turns the creek deadly, if you're on the wrong side of a big log.

Went fishing today and the only thing biting were the mosquitoes!

Despite efforts to seal every hole, I'm constantly battling the mice. I use poison outside and traps inside the house. I'm getting pretty good, baiting the traps with peanut butter, cheese or frosting. The little buggers always have the same look on their faces when I remove them from the trap...but I don't care, this is war!

I've spent hours looking for mushrooms with minimal results but at least I'm not a mushroom virgin like *some people*. We suspect deer, rabbits and squirrels are getting there first. After 2 hours I find three measly Morels which isn't even enough for an appetizer. At least mushrooms stay put when you finally see them, most prey runs for it life!

Mushroom hunting's a solitary activity, though today a biting horsefly's decided to come along for the ride. I decide to tackle the toughest terrain, where even Deer fear to tread but with a fishing pole in my hand I don't make it through the briars patch! It's thorns hold me like grim death as I yell to my wife to bring the *loppers*. Of course she's too far away to hear so I sacrifice my shirt and leave mushroom-less but with a hide full of thorns!

The next day I find huge mushrooms in my neighbor's yard and have to decide if I should share or eat them by myself...umm, umm good!

The first thing I do when preparing to take a bath at the farmhouse, is drown the bugs. There aren't many but even one's too much...I can't stand a bug in the tub!

The cable bridge has been destroyed several times when we have *gully washers*. I keep raising the bridge and Mother Nature keeps raising the creek... needless to say she's better at the game than me!

## **Group Think**

**“A type of thought exhibited by group members who try to minimize conflict and reach consensus without critically testing, analyzing and evaluating ideas”... Wikipedia**

**Strong governments lead to “groupthink”, which eventually threatens anyone unwilling to submit to preferences of the majority.**

**Things may get worse before they get better and someday we could be imprisoned for speaking our minds. The powers that be will do their best to control the debate, but in the end their corrupt system’s sure to collapse.**

**I wonder what Ben Franklin would think about and “Group Think?” Instead of fighting for who the government tells me to, I’d rather fight (hopefully via the pen), for those who aren’t trying to take away the God given rights of others.**

## **Handyman Stuff**

**“I can’t see anything in these goggles... what do I want vision or safety” - Mike Rowe**

**I’m finding that for *today’s job*, there’s no such thing as the “right tool” ...it just keeps evolving into a bigger and bigger mess!**

**Ever notice how a good tool’s your best friend and a bad one can kill you!**

**Nothing works as advertised and nothing goes as planned... those are cardinal rules for us amateurs!**

**Folks... I’ll gladly do *my* chores, just don’t ask me to do yours!**

Things always break, it feels good to fix them and sometimes it seems *that's* what we're here for. Eventually we tire of it and long for heaven where things don't fall apart and warranties never expire.

**Fix things! Don't automatically toss them, even if it's *more economical* to do so. Get a screwdriver, or glue out of the junk drawer and repair something!**

**Funny how the hardest screw to remove's the easiest one to put back.**

**There're many things I wish I could change about my life, some of them important other's trivial. Today while trying to repair the window frame I broke the glass instead. Unfortunately there's no way to go back and do it right... that's the story of my life!**

**I'm high on a ladder trying to *marry* a 2 x 8 to a damaged beam... It occurs that if this b.o.a.r.d. fell on my h.e.a.d., I'd be d.e.a.d. Think I'll wear a hard hat... its better than nothing! As usual, the *job* becomes more ridiculous as I *progress*. It would be easy for two men but doing it myself is nuts... I've lost count of how many times I've climbed the ladder!**

**Like terrorism, broken glass is nearly impossible to eradicate... no mater how much you sweep a lone shard may *get lucky*. When working with glass, you can't be too careful... so assume the worst!**

**After the storm, I spent hours collecting branches, cutting limbs and burning them. Having no chainsaw, a *bow saw* was my tool of choice. It performed well, so I said thanks and put it away. A good tool deserves thanks for a job well done!**

**Inevitably as you get better at something, in this case demolishing the chicken coop, you get a little cocky... that's when you get hurt!**

**"If you don't know how to tie a knot, you'll tie a lot!"... Rich Trethewey**

**The evolution of tools from hand, to power to CNC is as notable as the evolution of the human brain and inexorably intertwined!**

**Before climbing the tree I found only a very old rope to secure the ladder. It worked, so I guess an old rope can be better than no rope at all... but I hope to have enough sense not to trust my life to one like that again... it was stupid!**

**Haste makes waste is an old but true saying. It's better to climb a ladder three times, than fall off once. Maybe the admonition not to walk under one isn't as much a superstition as a warning to detour around it and avoid something falling on your head☺**

**This is the last time I'm buying discounted paint! It's not until you use it that you find out its bad. At that point it's too late to do the job right.**

**Have you heard of Tom Silva and Rich Trethewey? I wish I could frame or plumb like them!**

**How can I screw up these jobs so often? I used to say it's cause I don't do it for a living... but that excuse is getting old.**

**I fixed an old screen door, restoring some of its past glory. Long ago, someone added decorative details to it and strange as it seems, I feel a connection to whoever that was. Instead of being discarded, it will add more character to the farmhouse than a new screen door ever could. Working on *this old house* I feel a bond with the people who built it long ago. It's not ancestor worship, just respect for the day-to-day accomplishments of those who came before and who knows, maybe they *are* watching us.**

**I secured the rocking chair to the top of my Tucson and drove to the store for supplies. Returning home, I cruised into the garage and demolished the heirloom! Am I the only one who does such things?**





**Indiana**

**I stared at the outlet for a long time... it wasn't complicated but it looked good, worked and I'd installed it myself. For a week, I couldn't walk by without stopping to admire my work... I wonder if other "handymen" do the same?**

**Regarding admiring my work it's not just barn doors and electric outlets. The other day I found myself pausing to appreciate how nicely I had set out the trash for the garbage men. Granted, it was after Christmas and there's quite a bit but the cans were stable and would take a big wind to knock asunder... jeepers, I'm losing my mind!**

## Haters, Sickos and Sociopaths

“Toward no crimes have men shown themselves so cold-bloodedly cruel as in punishing differences of belief”... James Russell Lowell

At the moment, its popular to call ones *adversaries* “haters” and it plays well to blame *haters* for society’s ills. There certainly are haters out there but like so many things, it’s in the eye of the beholder and the finger pointers are often as bad as their targets.

I hear the word *hater*, in songs and interviews... usually by people who are considered *haters* by those *they* hate.

Slandering someone who disagrees with your views by calling them a *hater*, is an effective way of discrediting them. Those who share your views typically dislike, if not *hate* the *hater*. By calling someone a hater, his view becomes deviant... what better way to throttle debate!

Sociopathy, now that’s a mouthful! Not to mention a good word to toss around if you’re trying to shut someone up. I’ve heard it defined various ways, including meaning someone without a conscience and agree there’re

people out there with no conscience. I wonder though... what’s the definition of someone with a *perfect conscience*? Is it the person who does whatever society demands, or is it the person who questions those demands?

It seems to me, the more you conform to society’s expectations, the less likely you are to be called a deviant or sociopath. Conversely, the more independent you are, the more likely it is you’ll attract such slurs.

Our founding fathers would’ve been called sociopaths by the British, just as we called King George *insane*. Aren’t madness, hatred and sociopathy largely in the eye of the beholder and is our vision not blurred by self-interest and other *considerations*?

## Healing and Health

**“Every human being is the author of his own health or disease”...  
Buddha**

**Master your own neurosis, addiction, foibles or obsession, don't rely on others to solve all your problems. Medicine, counseling and religion can help tremendously but in the end we must change our own lives.**

**My metabolism is slowing down but my appetite is not. Hardly an original observations but relevant to my ever increasing battle of the bulge.**

**Regarding the persistent cough, I suggested trying to cough 1/3 less when he *spasmed* but this was dismissed as nonsense, “just wait till you're sick!” The cough is uncontrollable I was told and you can't use mind over matter to slow it down. I fruitlessly rebutted we won't know if it's impossible unless you try! Now prayer was another thing, they certainly believed it was worth praying for relief and I don't discount the effectiveness of that... I just think they may be related.**

**Okay, maybe it's *impossible* to reduce your coughing spasm by 1/3 but what about reducing it 1% for starters... again I was informed that my suggestion was nonsense. Regardless, I think it's *possible* to cough less by *barely* trying to cough less and agree that trying *very hard* to cough less seldom works.**

**We're told by many pros that you can't affect coughing or illness by attempting mind over matter, instead you must take medicine by the handful! I wondered why then are coughing spasms seemingly triggered by someone else coughing, or by words, looks, thoughts etc. There's also the phenomenon of yawns passing from one person to another. I'm not saying there's an absolute correlation, just that there's some validity to a mind body connection and we should control the impulse and advice to over medicate.**

When a child coughs uncontrollably might the *Pavlov Effect* be involved? What's strange about children subconsciously realizing their parents will come running when they cough? At night parents take turns waking up to comfort their coughing children. Without dismissing the fact that Asthma, allergies, sinus infections etc. are very real, we shouldn't dismiss the advice of the nanny with years of experience who said, "train the child, or the child will train you!"

Just out of curiosity, did Superman ever need a Band-Aid?

Funny how things have changed and how obese societies require new *lifestyle* products. We need air cleaners and breath rites to keep our fattened breathing passages open, as well as CPAP's and insulin. Meanwhile we seem increasingly unable to control our appetites for happy meals and other *indulgences*.

The actress brushes her teeth in an effort to keep from mindless eating... most of us know this trick but we've *outsmarted* it. She's gone a step further than most of us, she's outsmarted her subconscious!

The medical establishment is finally recognizing the connection between mind, spirit and body... at least some of them are. Predictably the medical establishment will claim credit for discovering the connection and add that to our bill!

Dangity dang and thank goodness for the gag reflex. It just saved me from choking to death on a pill the size of Texas!

Maybe they call this thing big hanging over my belt a "belly" because it looks like a big bell.

"Nothing is more fatal to Health, than an over Care of it" ... Benjamin Franklin

## Heaven

“See you in heaven if you make the list”... REM

Heaven should have no locks, keys, cords, cables, hoses or anything that tangles. Things don't fall apart, warranties never expire, repair men are on time and everything's completely wireless since the outdated stuff's been sent to the poor souls *down there!*

There should still be vacuum cleaners, tools and a few chores to do because idle hands are the devil's play things... right? I'm advised however that *Heavensters* are too busy with all that blissful fun to do any work. Maybe it's a moot point but is Heaven interesting?

“Paradise, can it be all they say it is, I close my eyes and maybe I'm already there”... Kansas

Forgive me but is segregated? They say church is the most segregated place in America so is Heaven any different? Once again I'm advised that its thoroughly integrated and there are no differences between *people* anymore.

Just wondering out loud... could once person kill millions and go to heaven and someone who cures cancer go to hell for being the wrong religion? Does it depend on *who* he killed, or if he's sincerely repented?

I hope dogs go to people, not pet heaven... on the other hand, what about really bad dogs... where do they go?

A critical phase in getting soldiers to fight is convincing them they'll go to heaven, or paradise if they're killed. It's also *helps* to persuade them the enemy *deserves* to be blown to kingdom come. I'm being cynical but these are some of the reasons we have so many wars!

“Knocking on Heaven’s Door” is on the radio but the reception’s poor. Moving closer I become an *antenna*, the reception improves and the music flows through me like a river.

I’m told God gives us free will but due to our sinful nature we misuse it and constantly foul things up. This results in a high probability of burning in Hell, unless we repent and ask Jesus to be our savior. Mass murderers, reportedly have the same option... as long as they truly repent and accept Jesus, they go to heaven and a blissful eternity. Meanwhile, their victims go to heaven or hell depending on whether or not they’ve accepted Jesus... the whole thing seems weird to me but I accept that God does whatever he wants. Anyway, I can’t help but wonder if this is all true or just a *misunderstanding*? Not surprisingly, other religions offer similar scenarios, albeit with different saviors and minor variations.

“May you be in Heaven a half hour before the Devil knows you’re dead”... Irish Blessing

## Heroes

“The good Lord gives us but one death, we must not bungle it”...Trader Horn

I guess we need heroes, they encourage us to strive for excellence but we shouldn’t idolize them and should look for peaceful ones, or is that an oxymoron? Interestingly today’s heroes are often “everyday people” unlike the larger than life *supermen* of bygone days.

*True* heroes protect those in need out of the goodness of their hearts, opportunistic strong men do it for the reward. Heroes are also history’s winners, if they weren’t they’d be remembered as villains instead!

Aggression is honored, passivity isn’t and it’s easy to *apply force* when you’re strong. Power and aggression is honored by society, especially by the weak... after all they aspire to dominant too.

There's little honor in being brave when you're the strongest and there's no disgrace in being afraid when you're weak. Consequently the labels hero and coward are often misplaced.

They're not exactly my heroes but I admire Tom the carpenter, Steve the plumber for their skill and tow truck drivers for their unsung courage.

In the movie, the guy tells his buddy who's trying to make the team that he'll fail and be a nobody, "like the rest of us." The hero goes on to prove him wrong, which is great but it made me consider that nobody's a "nobody." Everyone a *somebody* even if we never get that much ballyhooed *15 minutes*.

Heard another mention of heroes today... it was related to workers trying to save miners in a collapse. Three of the rescuers died during their attempt... and they deserve being called heroes. On the other hand, the term "hero" is used so often these days that I have to wonder, are we're living in extraordinary times, or just *extra ordinary* times ?

Despite the fancy talk, standing up for others usually involves a cost-benefit analysis but we don't say it, we just calculate.

We honor some killers, as long as they're doing it for the "right cause"... other killers are abhorred because their rampage didn't target those we hate. The result is that some killers are called heroes, while others are loathed and hunted down. An unfortunate "fact" of life, is that society has always sanctioned the killing of certain human beings in order to achieve crucial objectives like peace and stability.

"Heroism at command, senseless brutality, deplorable love-of-country stance, how violently I hate all this..." – Albert Einstein

## **History**

**“History is stranger than fiction, because fiction has to make sense”... Mark Twain**

**Can history be used to predict the future? Heck, we can’t agree on what *happened* in the past, much less what it meant!**

**There’s always a dark age going on somewhere, so don’t don’t listen to those calling for blood unless you truly have a vital stake. Those clamoring to spill your blood are probably in it for their own advancement!**

**History’s not only a great teacher, it can also be a big fat liar!**

**Don’t only read *your* books, read a neutral parties too and you’ll gain valuable perspective. These may not be flattering accounts, so if that’s what you’re after just read your own books.**

**Some have a sense of history, others a sense of fashion and it doesn’t pay to let the latter make decisions for you.**

**The phrase, “tide of history”, explains a lot... some things ebb and flow but in the end history’s a tsunami.**

**The historian stated that Andrew Jackson’s world was a brutal one, so he should be forgiven for things like the Trail of Tears but I’m not so sure. Are we not living in brutal times today as well? When we excuse past leaders figures for atrocities it does nothing to stop future outrages.**





**Andy J.**

**Someday people will talk about us in the past tense, like we talk about the Greeks and Romans. Were the Greeks to ancient history what the British are to modern history and does that make America to modernity, what Rome was to antiquity?**

**Most historians acknowledge the wrongs we did to Indians and Africans and for many Americans that's sufficient... but for the**

descendants of the oppressed, *acknowledgement* doesn't even scratch the surface.

Unfortunately I'm learning about history too much by studying and too little by living. Kindred to that, the *dust heap of history* may not be so bad after all... those who put you there may someday take your place.

The wonders of the ancient world, were built by conscripts and slaves as well as paid craftsman. Unfortunately their names are lost to history and the ones *named and remembered* are the despots who ordered monuments to themselves!

"History is a vast early warning system"...Norman Cousins

### Holidays

"Just as a puppy can be more of a challenge than a gift, so too can the holidays"... John Clayton

I'm planning to do absolutely nothing this weekend... but even now forces are conspiring against me!

What seems like sheer frivolity to me is often of extreme importance to my wife... guess I'll grin and bear it!

T'was the day before Christmas and all through the town harried shoppers became hurried drivers, doing their best to *do their duty*. It's a stressful time of year, especially during a recession...incomes may be down but expectations aren't☺

I heard someone say of course we need non-Christians... who else's going to work at the convenience store on Christmas?

I've been accused of being a Scrooge and as usual, I'm not terribly "into Christmas" but I've been shopping more than ever this year. For the most part, I'm buying little things but getting in the spirit – and oh yes, I'm supporting the economy!

Tis *the season* and we're worried someone will say we're cheap and lack the Christmas spirit, me thinks that's exactly how the merchants want us to feel!

Christmas is approaching and I'm curious how my wife will approach the holidays this year. The *crash* is only a year behind us and our finances are tenuous, so will we be keeping up with the Jones'? That's the problem with having friends who make twice as much as us!

Why don't they pronounce it "Christ mass" instead of Christmas... just wondering.

If they're still making holidays, I'd like to suggest "Pain In The Neck Day." I don't know if you'd give the *qualifying person* a card, or a kick in the behind!

Christmas among other things is when we're most likely to reconnect with old friends and reconcile or ask the distressed, if there's *anything we can do*.

No one cares how many presents you've bought... they just care about how many you've bought *for them*.

Jeez, now they're selling \$100 *Heirloom* Turkeys for Thanksgiving! The vendor says this historic breed can only be saved from extinction, if people eat more of them... how's that for circular reasoning!

"How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, his precepts! O! 'tis easier to keep holidays than commandments" ... Benjamin Franklin

### Home Improvement

The remodeling project tested my faith in man and God's the one who got us through it!

Contractors say they don't want us looking over their shoulder, because we get in the way. I think they just don't want us to see their shortcuts and mistakes but I'm not complaining cause the last thing I'd want is for clients to see me *perform* my job!

The contractor rebuked the worker for sitting while working on the tile floor, "there's nothing you can do while sitting on your butt" he said. It sounded harsh but later made sense... like walking under a ladder, sitting on your butt makes you less productive and could lead to accidents... imagine running a skill saw like that.

The less informed my clients are the easier my job is...unfortunately, contractors rely on the same principal with me!

Dealing with contractors is like dealing with my dogs... they spend their time trying to get their instead of mine. I just want them to perform per our contract but they have other priorities like paying their bills... be it dogs or contractor, I'm the gravy train!

The builder suggested several improvements for the rental house. "If it's nice you'll get better tenants", he advised but I'm hardly convinced. If past is prologue, there's no correlation between the quality of the property and the quality of the renter... there're tenants and there're opportunists!

I *love* their cock and bull stories! When the landscaper said, "I'll cut your grass higher so the weeds won't get any sun", he *really* meant he wants to cut it again next week, whether it needs it or not☺

## Human Nature

"The problem with people is that they're only human"... Bill Watterson

Planet earth... when humans finally reached the top, you could say the inmates took over the asylum!

**We're all "people in glass houses"...yet look at the stones fly!**

**Another difference between humans and beasts is we plan ahead... at least some people do.**

**Life... you solve one problem and another crops up, it's an imperfect system but beats the alternative!**

**I feel insecure in the air or water and though land is where I'm likely to die, it's still where I'm most comfortable.**

**Just as some Indians thought the conquistadors were gods, I wonder if Neanderthals thought the same of Cro-Magnons?**

**"Lists" are another thing unique to humans, no animal makes them unless it's in their head. Although animals exhibit superb memories in certain areas, their *to do lists* pale in comparison to ours... not to mention our *honey do lists*.**

**Everybody I know operates under the premise that we're always right. We should know we're not, but when it comes to dealing with others, human nature takes over and tells us we're in the right – it's hard wiring at its worst!**

**I *may* have A.D.D. but don't consider it problematic, since it allows you to tune things out. Without it you *have to* pay attention to the mindless chatter surrounding you. People with A.D.D., can focus on what they *want*, instead of what others want.**

**Some of us spend too much time preparing for eventualities that have almost no chance of happening. We inspect smoke detectors, install fire extinguishers, prepare for retirement and make sure we have good spare tires. Other people spend no time preparing for these *or* for the inevitable. The result is that group one ends up supporting group two... it's Aesop's old Grasshopper and Ant story.**

**So... when is human nature going to change? Uhh... never!**

Humans are a complaint based species... we spend a huge amount of time complaining. I don't think animals are capable of that – but there's no telling what they're thinking.

“We don't make the rules, we just have to abide by them”... how many times have you heard this? Granted, there're lots of rules that make sense, like no drunk driving but there're also rules that should be modified or scrapped. So don't be a sheeple, if a rule's ridiculous challenge and work to change it.

Humans have always come down hard on those who're lower in the hierarchy. In the Wolf pack or the lion pride, “underlings” are put in their place but rarely killed – we could learn a lot from the “beasts!”

Do I care about what other people think about how I live? Of course! I probably care more than should but not as much as others might want me to. Rest assured you have more influence than I like, just not as much as you may want... or you may not care one iota!

If you want to think ill of someone you'll find lots to hold against them... conversely, if you like them you'll excuse any number of faults.

Since we have boundless ability to blame others but meager capacity for taking responsibility, I wonder if this is a survival skill. Actually, it makes sense, as it prevents us from “beating up” on ourselves... there're usually a few people doing that already!

The things we think about during those *quiet moments* may be strange... but the things we *dwell* on are even stranger.

The report stated that people speak an average of 16,000 words a day... my question is – how many *thoughts* does the average person have each day? Isn't what's going on in our heads more important than what comes out of our mouths?

“Beating a dead horse?” I've been known to wear out the stable!

No wonder mankind invented weapons, since unlike animals, individuals vary tremendously physically. Some people are petite while others are huge and Sam Colt's famous for making all men *equal* but whoever strung the first bow and arrow beat him by a thousand years!

*It seems* some people do little more than convert oxygen into CO<sub>2</sub>, thank God plants turn it back!

It's funny how much of our lives are on auto-pilot... conversations for example. We're adept at giving standard answers that keep everyone happy, leaving us clueless what the conversation was about.

My neighbor was mad and wanted to kick the dog catchers ass – which made me wonder, how many people have actually kicked someone's ass? It's not all it's cracked up to be, but better than being on the other side!

It better not to brag, since accolades sound much better coming from someone else. The problem is, even though *pride's a sin*, we love being praised, especially when others do it. The problem with waiting for others to brag on us, is its rarity, so we end up doing it ourselves.

Walking through the parking lot I passed a very old woman, she glanced towards me, then averted her eyes. Thinking she'd appreciate a kind word... I said hello, she beamed and smiled beautifully!

We're born with Tourette's syndrome but it's *educated* out of us. I'd like to get some back as it allows us to speak our minds, although civility suffers in the process. Let your Tourette's and A.D.D. shine through from time to time, just don't let them take over!

There are few things people enjoy saying as much as, "I told you so"... which is usually prefaced with, "*I hate* to say it but ..."

**“I have often thought that God created the monkey because he was disappointed with man”...Mark Twain**

## **Humility**

**“To be humble to superiors is duty, to equals courtesy, to inferiors nobleness” ...Benjamin Franklin**

**Is false humility worse than no humility and where does politeness end and false humility begin?**

**When given too much we appreciate very little. Most people would like to be rich and famous but few attain that. Fewer still aspire to humble lives, which is at least as noble as fame and fortune.**

**Is being humble the same as being “down to earth” and is one preferable to the other? In both cases said traits are rarely as genuine as we claim.**

**Whether or not I’m humble, is debatable... what isn’t, is the fact that I’ve been humbled... repeatedly!**

**False piety is exactly that...false.**

**Are you humble, arrogant or in between? Most of us are somewhere in between... vacillating from one side to the other.**

**“If I had any humility I would be perfect”... Ted Turner**

## **Hypocrisy**

**“Every man alone is sincere. At the entrance of a second person, hypocrisy begins” ... Ralph Waldo Emerson**

**Hypocrisy is often directly proportional to self-righteousness... funny how this subject follows the chapter on humility and precedes the one on karma!**



Is it hypocritical that so many founding fathers were slave holders and that they produced such profound documents as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? Guess they wanted to have their cake and eat it too and like other great men throughout history, there was hypocrisy in their lives and their worlds. It's as if they were able to produce these document partially *because* of the hypocrisy they struggled with in their own lives.

“Politeness is the most acceptable hypocrisy”... Ambrose Bierce

### Karma

“Like gravity, karma is so basic we often don't even notice it”... Sakyong Mipham

Two wrongs don't make a right... no justice, no peace... what goes around comes around... what ye sow, ye shall reap... do unto others as you would have others do unto you...cause and effect and shit flows downhill ...get the point?

If you poop on others, when the chickens come home to roost, guess where they're gonna poop?

“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle”... Philo

We're all part of the problem and hopefully can all be part of the solution.

The problem with *divine* retribution and karma is that not enough people believe in them cause if they did, the crime rate would be much lower.

“You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late” ... Ralph Waldo Emerson

## Language, Buzzwords and “New speak”

“War is peace, slavery is freedom, ignorance is strength”...

George Orwell

The word “disarming”, says it all, especially in the context of, “he has a disarming smile.” The above should be a warning that someone’s trying to *disarm* and take advantage of you.

When you call for a strike do you mean *labor* or *air*... there’s a big difference. In both cases, someone’s trying to get their way but one method’s considerably more civilized than the other!

Words, by chance or design influence our thoughts. Considering the cities *Islamabad* and *Lahore*... is it a stretch to think that some people interpret these as “Islam is Bad” and “La Whore?” It reminds me of classmate stating that, “Saddam Hussein’s wife is named Gomorra.” The class gasped when they realized the Iraqi “first couple” was named after Sodom and Gomorra... the fellow laughed and said he was joking but his point had been made. How *evil* these Iraqis were... heck, they were even named after evil cities *destroyed by God*. We hear what we want to hear and take from a message which we want to take. Does the expression “cobbled together” have anything to do with Kabul, Afghanistan... probably not.

Regarding the *bad* sounding words above does it works that way in other languages too, do the names of our people and places sound evil to them?

An overused word is “absolutely”... it’s applied to things that are hardly worthy of *absoluteness*, just as the word “awesome” is applied to things that barely exceed average.

Could “last ditch effort”, come from trench warfare? When you finally got to your last ditch and there was nowhere else to go... uh-hh, probably not.

I keep hearing “absurd” and “unconscionable” used in partisan contexts, making these superlatives rather forgettable. It’s to the point where they’re only taken seriously by the choir being preached to.

Orwell may have coined the word but *Newspeak* has been around forever. In the Civil War commanders were told to treat prisoners of war with “all economy possible”, which meant “starve them.” Newspeak is the *art* of lying and applying lipstick to pigs.

Funny how the words travel and travail sound alike and in the old days travel literally was!

According to some, clichés are lame but I *beg to differ*. There’s always been a place for clichés and if something’s been said so well, why reinvent the wheel? If possible improve them and don’t rely on them but don’t belittle them... they’ve survived for a reason and will be around long after we check out.

“A lie told often enough becomes truth”... Vladimir Lenin.

### Law and Order

“Laws are made for the guys making the laws!”... unknown

The Constitution was a great document from the start, unless you were a woman, Indian or slave – if so it lost much of its luster!

I heard a commercial on the radio for a law firm, stating that they “represent the seriously injured and wrongfully killed” –hmmm, who isn’t *wrongfully* killed?

Life is like a court of law... anything you say, can and will be used against you. If it’s not a lawyer twisting your words, it’s your lover or someone equally “unassuming.”

Whether or not we need religion in order to live moral lives and not take advantage of others is debatable, I think laws are good enough. After all, religion *takes sides* while in theory, the law does

not. Without laws to deter us from following our base instincts, people would act even worse!

They had a *beer summit* at the White House, between a black professor and a white policeman. The president described it as a “teachable moment” but what was the lesson? To me it’s that, police should give citizens the benefit of the doubt and not beat or arrest them unjustly. For our part, citizens should treat police with respect, these actions make for a more civil society... and help prevent civilians from getting injured. Let the wheels of justice turn in court, under the auspices of a judge and not be administered at street level.

### Leaders

“They dedicate their lives to running our affairs”... Metallica

If someone has greater intellect than the rest of us, they should run the trains on time, or do medical research but they shouldn’t run our lives! The majority of people are neither idiots or slackers and can run their own lives better than the *geniuses* can. If however someone wants to turn the *management* of his life over to others, then so be it.

Is it unnatural for people to actually think for themselves? Many prefer letting leaders do the thinking, as long as they “look out” for us. Is this an evolutionary adaptation that the human race has made *for its own good*? If so, it’s not working right now.

When I see soldiers fighting for leaders they’ve never met and ideas that make no sense, I’m reminded how humans can behave like ants. They act instinctively... what’s our excuse?

### Loyalty and Trust

“You don’t earn loyalty in a day. You earn loyalty day-by-day”...  
Jeffrey Gitomer

I'm loyal to those who are loyal to me and despite being taught to love my enemy... the people I love most are those who *I think* love me.

Just about everything should have the caveat “within reason”... whether it's “obey thy parents” or “respect your elders”, you should do so based on whether or not they deserve it. Don't fall into the trap of doing anyone's dirty work, or being their minion. Respect is one thing, subjugation another, so don't be lead astray by *honored* traditions like obedience to authority. At the same time, don't use being independent as an excuse for shirking responsibility.

My loyalty to others is roughly proportional to their loyalty to me... not a perfect arrangement but better than being a doormat.

If we arrive at dire days – I will help people when I can... especially those who haven't mistreated me. I respect the instruction to *love your enemy* but am unlikely to do so all the time. After hundreds of years of people taking advantage of those who help them, that teaching should be practiced on a case-by-case basis. Gamers and abusers shouldn't be rewarded at the expense of good, hard-working people... do you want the lazy to inherit the world?

Loyalty is one thing, it should be earned and respected but betrayal is another... it shouldn't be done or taken lightly.

“The strength of a family, like the strength of an army, is in its loyalty to each other” ... Mario Puzo

### Machismo

They take their cues from tough guys like the Marlboro Man... even though he's just an actor. Meanwhile, many good men are seen as weak and ineffectual, after all when was the last time they kicked someone's ass?

The way for young men to appear cool, is to do what the macho men do...if that means getting drunk, or cracking heads they're

eager to comply. They play *follow the leader* and when the girls positively reinforce such behavior, it's almost impossible not to do the leaders bidding.

All you have to do is call them a "wuse" for not doing the macho thing and they'll fall in line... very few young men can stand being "called out." There's no *upside* to standing up for peace and reconciliation... doing so doesn't compare with the instant gratification available to those who *toe the line*.

So, is this tough guy thing *nature or nurture*? It's both... we're "blessed" with hormones that can be exploited and certainly our macho culture rewards *tough guys*.

"Coffee black, sunscreen hah!, beer, beer, beer, dressing on the side... hah, real men don't even eat salad... so it is with "real men." If such statements are not masking insecurity, I'll eat your hat!



Indianapolis, IN

**“Real men” won’t put on gloves or a hat until the “head man” tells them it’s okay to... they’d rather get frost bite, than be the first one to *dress for the weather*. They also don’t use the gentle cycle and in most cases don’t do laundry at all.**

**We've been taught we can question anything but the people we should question the most are the ones we question least... I think it's cause they have power and will retaliate if we dare.**

**"The tragedy of machismo is that a man is never quite man enough"... Germaine Greer**

### **Marriage, Women and Wives**

**"Before you get married, keep your eyes wide open, after you get married, keep them half shut"...Ben Franklin**

**Darling... you *may* not be perfect but you're perfect for me😊**

**I will never understand women but I'm trying to acquire at least a *working knowledge* of the female mind.**

**Full equality between sexes and populations is good... special privileges are bad.**

**Men are often called the dominant sex and this is said to be a man's world but women have been battling for control since the garden of Eden and they've done quite well.**

**We love to be complimented! Watching my Dad pluck the heart strings of his lady and still romancing the ladies, is interesting *and* inspirational!**

**Animals roll in the scent of their prey to make stalking easier. Humans also mask or enhance their scent when looking for mates, albeit with more sophisticated, if not more successful means.**

**Men should listen carefully to the counsel of women but we shouldn't be ruled by them. On a related note... how can we lead men, if we can't stand up to our women?**

**Once in a while, one of us will ask the other what they're thinking... almost invariably we're in parallel universes of**



thought. She's thinking accessories, kids, holidays... I'm thinking lumber, politics and bills.

The dynamics of our relationship change when we enter the boudoir... and change again when we climb in bed.

The clock in our bedroom is purposely set ten minutes fast which I don't understand. I don't want to wake up and have to calculate what time it is... that's what darn clocks are for in the first place!

There always seems to be a fresh copy of Victoria's Secret catalog laying around, they arrive weekly, often accompanied by free panties. Those alluring *angels* remind me that the female form is designed to seduce and perfectly designed to guarantee the survival of the species!

Don't argue with your spouse in front of others... they may egg you on, or take pleasure in it... but you will be the losers.

My wife has two functions to attend this week, so those evening I'll be living like a bachelor... it reminds me that without her civilizing influence, I might quickly revert to my baser instincts.

There's almost no such thing as a blonde... at least not in adults. Realizing society's preference, women want to look like fair maidens. Unlike Seal pups that start out blonde and turn dark, human females start out with various colors but usually end up blonde... at least during part of the mating cycle.

I don't expect my wife to always understand me and vice versa but if we tolerate and respect each other in spite of our differences, we just might be okay.

Women do not readily accept men's leadership... is it because we lead them astray, have different priorities, or because she has a mind of her own and a strong instinct to use it!

I've heard people say they cherish the wrinkles on their spouse's face, because of the many loving years they've had together. I used to think such statements were insincere but now as the lines

accumulate on our faces, I'm beginning to understand what they're talking about. Rumor has it that I'm responsible for the lines on my wife's sweet visage!

Occasionally my wife seems to be losing her marbles and I wonder if I'll *end up babysitting a crazy old lady*? Then reason prevails and I realize that if I'm around I'll be crazier than her! Hopefully we'll do our best to take care of each other with dignity and grace... like they say, "eventually we all need someone to change our diapers."

Beautiful women are by no means *a dime a dozen* but neither are they uniquely rare. The going price is about a million apiece, which is why rich men do so well!

The male of the species has been disappointing females for a million years... so why expect anything to change now? It's a matter of different standards and priorities. Other than the men who spoil things for the rest of us, we're nowhere near as picky as the average woman.

How can women be so sexy *and* so sexless at times? So alluring yet so disinterested at times? Obviously their *requirements* differ markedly from ours.

There must be a niche for macho bullies... after all a large percentage of the female population is attracted to them. There must be a good reason for that attraction... at least historically.

We find it difficult to live with each other and just as difficult living without each other. We communicate and operate differently on so many levels! Most women talk more than men, often sniping, snipping and badgering those around them. Men resort to violence more quickly than women and tragically often direct it at their women. We're not particularly well suited for living together but when successful, monogamy's a very good thing... especially for the children.

The protector of the blood line is typically the male partly because it's his name that passed on and he wants his line to continue into

perpetuity. The female's less interested in her man's blood line than in the success of her offspring. Given the chance she'll select *the best male* since her goal's to have a healthy family. She's interested in survival and improvement, while he is interested in continuation of *his* line at any cost. She looks for the best male and he's looking for the most attractive female... ironically both are often fooled!

Oxytocin, the scientist said is released after; nursing, orgasm and even after a pleasant conversation... I think it's also *released* after a good cry.

We're basically life support systems for our *nads*. All the other organs and systems are simply means of locomotion or sustenance for the organs that matter! Males and females have distinct anatomical differences, related to their brains and bodies, each designed to maximize the DNA's chance to reproduce. The female of the species is designed to drive the male wild with excitement, he's programmed to make her think he'll hang around and be a big help!

I don't know why but men whistle and women hum... hmmm?

"And all the bad boys are standing in the shadows and all the good girls are home with broken hearts"... Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers

I'm amazed at the large number of beautiful women in New York City... but it's actually not that high percentage wise. I'm guessing that several hundred people a minute are passing by, so the chances of encountering beauties is considerable!

It's likely that there're many women out there who could be your soul mate. It's also likely they're looking for roughly the same thing in a man. If you come to the table with these you can have a happy marriage with almost anyone... if you don't, it's unlikely any marriage will succeed.

In many countries and times, marriages were arranged and their success rate didn't vary much from American marriages today.

True, the women in those marriages usually couldn't get a divorce but our divorce rate of almost 50% is an indication that our *love* marriages don't work so well either.

Unlike the mountain man I like a *full time night woman* even though the *arrangement* comes with a high level of consternation. Bear Claw Kris was also wrong about a woman's breast being, "the hardest rock that the almighty ever made on this earth!"

Our daughters have grown up to be full-fledged or quasi feminists... after all, they've attained hard won victories and whether liberal or conservative, will never relinquish their *rights*... why would they? That's why reform may be in vain and after the fall, there could be an unpleasant.

Would it be wrong to make Stepford spouses? We *may* be able to get rid of the *bitch* gene and the male *asshole* gene... but would we still be human? It's one thing to *engineer* our babies to have our favorite eye colors and another to alter their basic personalities. Meanwhile, aren't women disadvantaged if they lose the ability to bitch and men disadvantaged if they're too passive? There may be scenarios where Stepford wives are desired by some, but most of us prefer the real McCoy and all the commotion that comes with her.

Monogamy? Some of us are monogamous in theory but not in practice, some are in practice but not in theory. In other words, they'd love to have an affair but haven't found a partner. Reportedly neither sex is hard wired to be monogamous but males are slightly *worse offenders*. Our eyes wander and our bodies stray for different reasons, men are wired to sow seeds far and wide and women are programmed to find the *best* seeds out there.

I'm guessing there's a correlation between men who don't fantasize and infidelity. There's probably also a correlation between; handsome, rich, powerful men and lack of a *rich* fantasy life. They don't need to fantasize, as they've always attracted *willing* women! The majority of men, *enjoy* a rich fantasy life and less need... or opportunity to philander.

We can be a great team and by law and nature and joined at the hip. We're also so different that we shouldn't rule each other unless one side agrees to it, which I suggest no one should ever do.

I'm home from the business trip and finally back in my own bed... I know I'm home because I'm being elbowed for snoring! In my hotel room, I could snore as much as I wanted!

Another reason humans advanced beyond the apes, is that *our* women are more demanding than theirs. Female apes are content with fruit, veggies and beds of leaves, while our gals like more civilized luxuries. Think about it guys, how much would we get done if the gals weren't constantly *urging* us on?

Men are called assholes and women called bitches... this is logical. Women bitch and men behave like assholes. When I mentioned this to my wife she didn't comment and *may* have smiled.

The funny thing about sex is, the things *nice* girls blush about and claim are weird or wrong, are often what turn them on the most! When you get down to it...women are as kinky as men and while we're usually content with a few variations, women require greater variety to remain interested. The gals may initially be appalled by *this* or *that* but if they read or hear from the girls friends that *it's okay*, they not only embrace it, they may demand it!

I mentioned to my wife that I agree that men think about sex every thirty seconds. The more I think about it, that's when we're behind on the bills, when we're *caught up*, we think about it even more.

I love women but don't want to be governed by hormones, traditions and phases of the moon...

At approximately the age that a woman's sexual "power" over her man begins to wane, his potency decreases as well. Sometimes this occurs at an ideal rate allowing the older couple to find a new kind of intimacy based less on sex and more on friendship.

Unfortunately these aren't always in sync and one partner may have unfulfilled urges leading to indiscretion.

Wife and I joke that one reason we're together, is we've invested so much time "training" each other, that we'd hate to do it all over again!

Although our marriage seems stronger and I love her more than ever, there're still times when I think she's wacky. Christmas and late winter seem to be those times... but I would need to keep more careful records to be sure exactly when the phenomenon occurs.

As I hit my 50s and my wife her 40s, we're having some of the best sex of our lives. We're more experienced, less self-conscious and realize the clock's ticking. Whether we have five more years of good sex or 25, we understand that we need to get it while the getting's good!

I put up with peanut butter on knives and spoons and she puts up with me splattering the bathroom mirror... if that's the worst of it, then it's not too bad for either of us!

When I see these guys who have ruined their marriages by being unfaithful, I think to myself I would never do that. The *risk reward ratio* clearly indicates it's not worth it and if you've got a *pretty good thing* why screw it up? With a little imagination you can fantasize and not have to deal with the *consequences*, including sex which probably wouldn't be as good as we expect!

I wear whatever I find hanging in my closet, as my wife has good fashion sense and likes to shop. Occasionally there's something I refuse to wear, based on it being uncomfortable or me thinking I'll look silly in it. When it comes to looking ridiculous, I don't need any help!

While searching for a vacuum cleaner belt in the cabinet, I came across many strange *female items*. In addition to the mini-marathon visors, there're ribbons, gift bags and several very small cushions -- the purpose of which I cannot imagine.

There're such good looking women out there that it blows me away! That's why it's *the package*, including brains and personality that are so important... not just great looks.

Friends says "this is what it's all about", the Super Bowl celebration and a big party. I'm looking forward to the party too but receive a lecture on the way there, about not drinking too much. Then I'm reprimanded for smoking a cigar and lectured the next morning for saying the wrong thing vis-à-vis drinking and driving to the young folks... hmm! It's nice to have somebody *looking out for you* and often she's right but that doesn't make it any easier to take!

Strangely, I was *a victim* of "progesterone poisoning", when my wife's estrogene cream rubbed off on our sheets and I absorbed it. In addition to developing a sudden fondness for Abba, I called the neighbors to apologize for missing their birthday party... what's next, sending thank you notes after Christmas?

Why do they call it menopause? Doesn't the menstrual cycle end at this point? Wouldn't "menostop", be a more accurate description?

My wife's looking for her watch at the bottom of her purse and it reminds me of trying to find something at the bottom of my tool bucket. After removing combs, brushes and other necessities, she arrives at the small items that settled to the bottom. Many a time, I've dug through screwdrivers and drill bits to locate a certain tool... all I get is bloody knuckles!

When our assets increased in value, I'm torn between bragging about it and keeping my big mouth shut, because *asset appreciation*'s a "buy signal", as in let's go out and buy something!

I went to the store and bought nine healthy items and a delicious Pumpkin Roll, so guess what... instead of getting an "A" for scoring 90%, I'm scolded and given an "F" for fatty food!

"Single men have consciences married men have wives"... Samuel Johnson



I-65, Indiana

**Meek Shall Inherit the Earth...**

***“The meek shall inherit the Earth but not its mineral rights”... J. Paul Getty***

**What better way for the meek to inherit the earth than by the vote and what better way to cling to power than by force.**



If the meek inherit the earth, will it be instantly or slowly and by degrees? Will the meek hold sway forever or only till they've become as wicked as those they've replaced?

When the meek take over, will they show the same aggressive tendencies as those they've deposed? Human nature being what it is, I suppose they will.

How are the meek ever going to inherit the earth if they can't rig the rules like the powerful have done? The overlords are Goliaths, the meek are  *Davids*  scouring the ground for stones... but somehow David prevailed!

The Nanny State may be the ultimate expression of the meek inheriting the earth culminating in society becoming an ant colony. Let's not forget the  *efficiency*  with which ants eliminate those who won't submit to their Queen.

Maybe the meek  *shall*  inherit the earth but that hardly means there will be justice for all.

When "many who are first will be last and many who are last will be first", it may not be more peaceful for anyone, the shoe that kicks the down-trodden may just be on a different foot.

### Military Industrial complex

"... we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex"... President Eisenhower

Although we have the largest military industrial complex (MIC) in history, we don't  *appear*  to be highly militarized. Only the tip of the iceberg is visible, as most of our military assets are deployed overseas in countries we're "protecting" or liberating. Our economy however is highly dependent on the MIC and we're the largest arms dealer in the world and until recently our defense budget was as large as the rest of the worlds combined!

What'd really be nice would be a larger *medical research complex* and a smaller military industrial complex. Each year, more Americans die from disease than the number killed in all of our wars. We'd also help others more by curing disease than by nation building. Unfortunately war mongers, ideologues and profiteers are interested in bombs not health.

I realize there're regimes that should be toppled and genocide should be interrupted whenever and wherever it occurs. As often as not however, we support those willing to do the bidding of our corporations and the ubiquitous special interest groups.

Regardless of what anyone thinks, the MIC, is a fact of life and has been since the flint ax *line* commenced thousands of years ago.

We face legitimate threats to our security from time to time but they may be rarer than our leaders would have us believe. Threats are often exaggerated to rouse the masses and win support for adventures that do nothing but enrich the arms dealers and financiers.

The U.S. reportedly has sixteen intelligence agencies but a man almost blew up an airliner with an *underwear bomb*. Do these meddlesome, violent organizations do much good and do we need so many of them? I doubt that the Soviets or Nazis had that many clandestine *service* organizations in their *prime*.

I agree we need a serious MIC and dismantling ours while other don't would be disastrous. , we'll be sorry. It would just be nice if we'd learn to use the military *responsibly* instead of letting special interests control our foreign policy.

How ironic is it that our former and futures enemies are the ones currently financing our war machine?

Not surprisingly the interstate highway system was designed around our defense requirements and is part of the MIC. Straight-a-ways at regular intervals were carefully incorporated into them, in case the air force needed emergency landing strips.

The advent of the interstate highway system also meant the end of light rail commuter lines and made us into the most oil dependent society in the world. Eventually, we declared our willingness to use the military to defend our foreign oil supplies and any potential interruption of said oil was deemed an “act of war.”

In one fell swoop, the MIC had justified its existence for perpetuity. Along with their cronies, the oil and auto companies, the MIC’s owners grew rich, while we grew fat, lazy and dependent on cheap gasoline.

I’m watching the business news and the *ticker* mentions today’s sponsors... is it a surprise they’re all companies with lucrative defense contracts?

### Moderation, Willpower and Delayed Gratification

“Freedom isn’t procured by a full enjoyment of what is desired but by controlling the desire” ... Epictetus

This chapter’s title is un-cool, old fashioned and corny and quietly practiced by the healthy, wealthy and wise.

We do most of the damage to our bodies on weekends and holidays, when we *show off* our eating and drinking skills. It’s especially important to have a bit of self-control at these times!

Depriving oneself of reasonable indulgences leads to the worst binges of all but that shouldn’t apply to your worst poison. Once you’ve figured out the hard way what it is, don’t go near it! Enjoy life to the fullest and don’t forgo the more innocent *treats* you can handle, as that leads to falling off the wagon and binging even more.

*If you can't be with the one you love, love the one you're with!*...has always had its adherents and it’s always been square to suggest that if you can’t be with the one you love, you should exercise self-control.

**Willpower, self-control, moderation and restraint are so easy to say and so hard to do!**

**Moderation, willpower and delayed gratification are potent antidotes to, sloth and gluttony aka, two of the “Seven Deadly Sins.”**

**You may have nerves of steel, iron will and rock hard abs but that doesn’t make you *better* than the rest... just more capable, so don’t squander your abilities!**

**Even guilt can be a good thing if it keeps you from doing that which you shouldn’t.**

**There’re people of strong will and people of strong character... the latter is better. The strong willed are often just people with the power to put your *cojones* in a vice.**

**People have written entire books on “will”, which is more a part of character than part of the brain. Some are blessed with enormous willpower, for the rest of us it ebbs and flows.**

**When your willpower *is* flowing, take advantage and make progress. On those days that it ebbs, fight hard to hold onto your gains.**

**Moderation like *delayed gratification* is a lonely fellow! How can these gents compete with the bashes at *misery’s* house?**

**I’ve eaten a thousand burgers and partaken of other vices a hundred times, there’s no gain in having more and there never was! Ignore those who egg you towards fatter, drunker, stupider... because they’re hooked. If friends are determined to go down the wrong path, find new ones... unlike relatives, you’re not *stuck* with them. It takes gumption, but if your friends are in *low places*, upgrade to people who aspire to more than being drunk and disorderly! If misguided friends are willing to come along for the ride, that’s fantastic... if not just smile and wave good bye.**

## Money and Wealth...

**“A penny saved is a penny earned”... Ben Franklin**

**There is *another* age old battle going on... it is between the rich and poor.**

**Money... why is it that the more you make, the more you need!**

**There're asses and there're assets. Having a nice ass is an asset... being an ass isn't.**

**I've been harping on it but if you want to spend more, earn more!  
On the flip side, if you don't want to work more, spend less.**

**It's easier to make money by exercising your brain than your back. You can also do it the Al Capone way but eventually you'll do hard time.**

**It's been years since those who are frugal could openly *ply their trade*... during the roaring 90s and early 2000's, they were called *losers*! Waste not want not was tossed and *shop till you drop* was the mantra. We fell for anything with a fancy label or shiny paint!**

**Funny how we resent those doing a little better than us and defend those doing a thousand times better.**

**The rich say they can always pay half the poor to kill the other half of the poor and the only *restraining factor* is if they're all killed they'd have to take out their own trash!**

**The economy can tank while the stock market reaches new highs, as companies move manufacturing offshore where labor's so cheap. Meanwhile, the working class has little clout because it's more difficult for them to move their labor than for the rich to move their money.**

**At the rate the government's printing them, dollars could soon be a dime a dozen!**

How you take care of your “things”, determines if your ownership will just be *taxing* or *break your bank*.

We sometimes gauge a person's "value" by the size of their bank account. When someone says, "I'm worth more than him", they may be referring to bank accounts but they're making a broader statement too.

The elite will do anything to hold on to the institutions that allow them to amass extraordinary wealth. Fiat money, derivatives and related schemes not only allows plundering wealth from society but unlike kings of old, they can easily move their fortunes to *friendlier environs* if necessary.

I hear there's more gold on the ocean floor than on land... there's also more boats under the sea than on it but that's another story☺

A few years ago an infamous financier made 41,000 times as much in one year than an average American family... is it just me, or is there something wrong with that picture?

Money's to humans, what blood is to vampires, to survive we must constantly replenish our supply.

Via the widespread acceptance of; derivatives, credit default swaps, subprime loans, futures, puts, shorts and the like, humans have been *reprogrammed* to accept fiat money and debt slavery as the natural state of affairs. How else could we *creatively* finance our conspicuous consumption and how would the government be able to spend without limits? The “bee hive” needs to be restructured but not along the lines of rewarding greedy brainiacs.

Having a large bank account and full larder, doesn't mean you're wealthy... especially if you're never satisfied with what you have. Money like all addictive substances slips through our fingers, or goes up in smoke.

There're investors, there're gamblers and there's overlap. We shouldn't invest at the Roulette Wheel, or *gamble* in the stock

market but that's what many do. Reagan wanted wealth to trickle down from the top and Obama wants it to gurgle from the bottom but what's wrong with starting in the middle? That's where the greatest concentration of people who work hard and pay taxes are.

One good thing for the dollar, is that it's still the currency of choice, for everyone from narco-traffickers to Somali pirates.

Meanwhile "respectable"

international businessmen are starting to ask for payment in euros or yen and that's not good for the greenback.

The fact that a tiny percentage of the population controls so much of our wealth suggests that financial disaster has already occurred.

If it's true that behind every great fortune there is a great crime, what does that say about those in the *middle class*, are they *petty* criminals?

There's nothing wrong with wealth re-distribution schemes, as long as it's done with the proponents wealth instead of everyone else's. It's also no surprise that the rich want to redistribute Dick and Jane's money while planning to hold onto theirs like grim death.

As long as the investor class keeps the lower class "poor enough", there will always be a steady supply of soldiers to fight for them.

If you learn to use the financial system intelligently it will work for you, if you don't it just might ruin you.



Nor Cal

Everyone's trying to *get by* and *get more*, which makes the world an 'interesting' place.

Pennies aren't sacred and I've thrown some but quarters are still worth picking up... if just barely. Since pennies are made of zinc and fairly worthless and aching back only has *so many bends* left, I need to make at least a quarter for each stoop.

You don't make a man strong by lifting weights for him and you don't make a man wise by thinking for him. You don't make winners by rewarding losers and you shouldn't throw good money after bad.

"We're all pieces of each other's puzzles"... Native American saying

Are you living in overdrive too? Sometimes I feel like a bartender, hustling to move as efficiently as possible, to make more money for



everyone to spend! I need to drive a harder bargain with those people... whoever they are!

Don't get hung up on being productive all the time... take time to smell the roses and marvel at the clouds going by. The people demanding that you be more productive will never be satisfied, not even when they've spent you like a *last dollar*!

I'm on a cruise watching gamblers use their *systems* at slots and card games. In the end, most lose their money – I don't think they understand basic math and elementary statistics!

I wasn't a good student and didn't learn much in business college... what I did learn was; hire an accountant, the law of diminishing returns and pay yourself first.

Regarding the criticism I receive for how I earn money, it's interesting that the critics have no problem demanding their share of that *tainted* money!

We're "invited" to join the investor class and grow rich but it mostly benefits the puppet masters when the pool of investors grows. They need to maintain the proper ratio of puppet masters to *working stiffs*. Since working folk reproduce at a higher rate, our *masters* must allow a few new members to their ranks so the that the ratio of rich to poor doesn't become so low that bread, circus and manipulation fails to maintain "order."

During NPR's fund drive the announcer describes what separates his listeners from "ordinary" people. He described his as having a "deep concern for the community", which I interpreted as meaning his have more money than "ordinary" listeners. Everyone's at least somewhat concerned about their community but some have more money to oil the machinery with!

Hate to say it but you don't score points by working hard, you score them by making money...that's what friends and family want to see and share.

As you wake up, stagger to your old car and hope it starts, remember the brain produces greater results than the back. I'm just the messenger and that's how it's always been. Manual labor's as noble as any job... it's just not rewarded accordingly.

There're two types of bank robbers, those who rob banks and those who *own* them. Robbers steal a few thousand at a time, while owners steal a few dollars at a time from their customers via fees and charges...so guess who steals more?

So far there's been no decoupling of the world's economies and the rest of the world's hitched their wagon to our star. When we collide with the sun, there will be serious consequences for everyone, or at least those who work for a living.

It was scary enough when we learned that Greenspan was a protégée of Ayn Rand but when Helicopter Ben starts taking advice from the host of Mad Money, look out!

"The golden rule ... those who have the gold make the rules" -unknown

### Mother Nature

"Nature must not win the game but she cannot lose"... Carl Jung

You tell me not to eat meat and to treat other species as *tribes of equals*. If you re-create the lion to lie down with the lamb is it even a lion anymore? What's next gators and sharks?

It's funny how westerners, who're responsible for driving many species towards extinction, spend so much time studying *their victims*. Indigenous peoples hunted animals but didn't kill them purely for trophies and didn't have the means to destroy habitat on a massive scale. They hunted animals sustainably and often revered them, now the roles are reversing...so what gives?

The wind's blowing 40 miles an hour while I try to stake a pine tree so it won't blow away and my fingers are getting bloody. I'm fighting Mother Nature so I know how this will end but having

**been involved in so many losing battles, one more doesn't matter - Don Quixote where are you!**

**I'm watching a TV show about decimation of the whales and it makes me wonder... what's more valuable to the planet Earth – another billion human beings, or the survival of a few thousand Blue Whales? I value humans over whales but think we must protect these wonders of nature too.**



**Rocky Mountains**

**Do lions wake up after a weekend binge, hung over and thinking, "Geez, its freaking Monday and I've gotta get a Zebra!"**

I'd hate to be a bat, snake or chicken but wild horses would be near the top of my list. So who's responsible for a horse's beauty and grace, God or man? I'd give God the glory but due to selective breeding mankind deserves a little credit too. Mother nature's Zebra may be better able to survive in the wild but horse's got the looks!

What is it with Salmon? The male doesn't even penetrate the female, he just masturbates as she releases her eggs. They call it spawning... I call it boring!

In the news a family released a 300 pound Seal back into the wild, after nursing it back to health. On its flipper they put a "medical history" tag, in case it's rescued again. If its rescued by a shark or a Bear it won't matter...they can't read!

Mother nature's job is to birth you and eventually to kill you. She's in charge of keeping things moving in an orderly fashion and making sure the place doesn't get too crowded.

They say a horse designed by a committee is a camel but which would you rather have if you were crossing the desert?

Why do they call zoo animals *residents*... isn't the word *prisoners* more accurate?

Entropy, rust and decay, are "Mom's" way of making sure nothing lasts forever. Whether a body or a skyscraper, it takes more energy to keep them up, than bring them down. Consider the case of Mr. Dumpty – "all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty *together* again."

There's an entire infrastructure devoted to making sure that things fall apart. Whether it's Mother Nature, Father Time or the wrecking ball -- creativity and imagination constantly face these hazards. Whether you call them; good and evil, Ying and Yang, sun, water and wind, or God and the devil, the same forces that create beauty and life also erode them. In our bodies, the miracle

of cellular division which makes a child grow, eventually becomes disorderly and kills us by cancer or old age.

Obviously rabbits aren't very bright, otherwise my dog wouldn't regularly catching them in the back yard. God made them dumb for a reason and gave them a prodigious rate of reproduction so they may thrive anyway.

On TV, Army Ants overrun the Termite colony in an attempt to consume their larva. The lowest to the highest species prey on each other... another one of "Mom's" methods to prevent overpopulation. Another type of ant herds Aphids like we herd sheep. The Aphids provide a sweet nectar that sustains the ants, who in turn protect the Aphids from predators... is this symbiotic or slavery?

We wouldn't want to model our society after that of Ants or Bees but we can learn a few things from their behavior. They're orderly but mindless... we're mindful but disorderly!

Mother Nature has to be one "rad" bitch ... after all she's Momma Bear to the whole world!

Nobody makes parts like "Mom"... so take care of your body. Medical technology's come a long way but it's still far from able to replace an eye or a hand that's good as the original.



New York City

**"Nature, Mr. Allnut, is what we're put into this world to rise above"... Katherine Hepburn**

**Is it possible for animals to contemplate suicide? Is a chained dog or a cage chimpanzee simply miserable or does it want to end it all?**

**As I mash apples for a batch of cider, the Bees and Flies quickly descend. I hate them but they're just doing their job and filling a niche like the rest of us.**

**Why don't *free roaming* Orcas attack us? Somewhere along the line did they learn it's better to leave people alone? Maybe it was during the whaling era, when their relatives were hunted nearly to extinction.**



Does the lioness revel in the carnage she commits while feeding her family? Does she feel guilty or is she programmed not to feel that emotion in the least?

Regarding the “lunkers” we caught, I like photographic souvenirs better than the wall mounted variety. Taking advantage of camera angles you get a better result for a fish story, than that *finite* trophy on the wall!

Animal intelligence? Horses and deer may not be as dumb as we think and due to their speed and keen senses, don’t have to be brilliant, they just have to see you coming and giddy up!

Thanks to a sore hip I haven’t walked in a month but today I did a mile and passed where the possum, her Joey and a skunk met their maker. The last time I passed there were traces of all three, now the rains washed them away and to there’s not the slightest trace of their existence.

I squashed the tiny spider as it traversed the kitchen floor. Unless it eat ants we don’t need more critters in here... I didn’t squash it with glee... but I did it.

Earth... isn’t it basically a rock covered with millions of years of poop and *dead stuff*? Each year it gets bigger cause *stuff* has to go somewhere and magically that stuff supports life!

“Nature is resilient, it has survived worse things than us”... unknown.

## Music

I hate it when a song gets stuck in my head and I sing, whistle or hum it all day long... well actually I don’t hate it, my wife does!

Music’s like a chemical reaction, we like it or don’t but we react to it. There’s *good* music, stuff we don’t relate to and “crap” we can’t stand at all... its different for each of us.

Is it a paradox that the descendants of slaves created free form music like jazz and R&B? Probably not... why wouldn't people longing for freedom create free music while those holding them in bondage created more *orderly* music?

When John Mellencamp sings, "if you're not part of the future that get out of the way", what does he mean? I hope it's not, if you're not part of the future as certain people want it then you're supposed to get out of the way!

How many songs have been written since the beginning of time? I've no idea but a billions have made it as far as the inside of people's heads.

"Packed like lemmings into shiny metal boxes, like chestnuts in a suicidal race"... The Police

At the Festival, we listened to a young rock band and I noticed their lyrics were utterly party line. Appearance wise, they look like rebels from the 60s but their music sounded like sitcom theme songs. Meanwhile old farts were making out on the dance floor... With few exceptions, rock 'n roll has been PC for years... chalk it up to the usual suspects.

"I worry that the person who thought up *Muzak* may be thinking up something else"...Lily Tomlin

## Nukes

"Nuclear weapons can wipe out life on Earth, if used properly"... Gareth Owen

America's "nuclear deterrent" is different now than it was in the cold war days. Instead of keeping *the bear* at bay via MAD, it's increasingly contemplated as an instrument of persuasion. It's become the *logical* last step in our foreign policy, when conventional means of "diplomacy" do not achieve the desired results. **Nukes are the ultimate stick when carrots don't work!**



**Will we destroy half the world for ideology and economic domination?**

**When I was young I never felt particularly threatened by Russian missiles, even though it was the height of the Cold War. Now in the midst of the war on terrorism, I don't lose sleep over Al Qaeda's schemes, being more concerned with my *immediate problems*. When I was younger, that meant how to meet girls and *driving a stick* ... now it's about paying the bills.**

**"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones" ... Albert Einstein**



**I hear people suggest that we bomb various countries back to the stone age... but these countries are in the stone age already! We on the other hand are "highly advanced" and may not adjust well to going back in time. We should think long and hard before using nukes... aren't there better forms of influence than resorting so frequently to deadly force?**

**One reason we do think twice before nuking our enemies, is the fear it might create a nuclear winter that could severely damage our civilization. If not for that some leaders and followers would have no problem blowing *insubordinate* nations to kingdom come.**

**Now if our leaders think they can use nukes on a limited basis without repercussions, then Katie bar the door!**

**I suppose a nuclear apocalypse is almost inevitable, since eventually many countries will have these weapons *and* the will to use them. Because of ideology, self-preservation or religion, countries will think they have the right to nuke their neighbors as has been done before. Superpowers think they've the right to impose their will on others but if they cross the line too casually, smaller nuclear nations might decide to pull the trigger first...thinking they've *nothing to lose*.**

**From the sling shot to the machine gun... inventors of advanced weapons eventually have them used against themselves and we're stoned if we think that nukes are any different. In the long run everything is possible and haven't we been warned that *those who live by the sword, die by the sword*?**

**"Free nations are peaceful nations. Free nations don't attack each other. Free nations don't develop weapons of mass destruction"...George W. Bush. Really George, really?**

**Like Smith and Wesson making all men equal a century ago, Einstein's discovery could make all countries equal too. Not that it's anything to look forward to but the genie's out of the bag.**

**"I'm proud of the fact that I never invented weapons to kill"...  
Thomas Edison**

**The USA may be backing itself into a corner, yes we have enough nukes to kill everybody in the world several times... but an increasing number of countries will soon have enough nukes to kill of us once and that's all it takes. If we keep imposing our views on others -- how can it not come back and bite us on the rump?**

**Instead of curing disease and helping billions of people, we squander our national treasure developing bunker busting nukes that are more "usable" and "environmentally friendly." If they're used will they save humanity, maintain the status quo or destroy the world?**

I'm curious - how long would it take a highly industrialized country, with an existing *peaceful* nuclear program to develop nuclear weapons? I wonder how many of them have plans on the drawing board - just in case?

“It would be our policy to use nuclear weapons wherever we felt it necessary to protect our forces and achieve our objectives” ...

Robert McNamara

### Obligations

“The thing is, Bob, it's not that I'm lazy, it's that I just don't care”... Office Space

I think we're primarily *in it* for ourselves and our loved ones, which is like being in it for ourselves, since their success trickles down to us. When we do nice things for those outside of our little circle, are we doing it for the right reasons... who cares, do it anyway!

Once you've earned a reputation for being a doormat, you'll find it a hard *rep* to unload. People like having doormats around to wipe their feet on and resist the victims attempts at emancipation ... that's when you need to be at the top of your game!

When we spend too much time accommodating others, there's no time left for doing what we believe we're put in this world to do... some call that selfish I don't.

Most people would like to simplify their lives and focus on the things of greatest importance to themselves. Unfortunately, the PTB are determined to complicate our lives and make it impossible for us to focus on anything other than being a spoke in their wheel.

No one's satisfied with my “performance and since I *believe* that I'm responsible I keep trying to please people. I think people who *don't give a hoot* have it a lot easier... that's what I want to be!

Everyone's so busy! In fact we're *conditioned* to think we should be busy all the time. The inference is, the busier you are the better you are.

With all due respect, they're too many people telling me to jump through too many hoops... it can't be done! My new motto is going to be, "I'll get around to it, when I get around to it." But that falls on deaf ears, because after all, we have obligations! The problem with jumping through these hoops, is we end up old before our time. Worst of all, we end up never taking the time to do what we believe we were put here to do.

Obligations, expectations, anticipations all these "*ations*" can be overwhelming!

We create obligations, we're subject to them and we keep track of them and if we don't, the other guy does.

We didn't create this system and cavemen surely had obligations too... this system's been around for a very long time!

Actually this system of obligations *may* be positive for the human race. We do better when we cooperate so obligations might have *evolved* to strengthen ties to those around us. The caveat is, it's not always equitable but when it is, it's no worse than alternative systems.

It's easier to borrow a cup of sugar from a neighbor then accept his advice. You can easily return the sugar but when you take a guy's advice, he thinks he's done you a big favor!

We borrowed a cup of oil from the neighbor and returned a bottle of it to them the next day. So instead of things being *even*, we accidentally created an obligation... it's a viscous cycle!

When you do something nice someone you create an obligation which they usually repay but sometimes become resentful too. Eventually we forget the favor but not the resentment!

It's better not to do favors if you're doing it to create an obligation... favors should be like gifts, given without an expectation of getting repaid. Buying someone lunch to *mend fences* usually backfires and creates an obligation they neither want or need.

When I say *for now on I'm doing things my way...* I mean to *tweak* things but I could end up being *a butt hole*.

## Oil

"This conservation crap has gone too far... why did we take this country from the Indians if we aren't going to use it" -- Al Bundy.

Now that Iraq *appears* liberated, pacified and a compliant Iraqi government has indicated that American oil companies will get lucrative contracts, everything appears hunky-dory. Time will tell if we've done the Iraqi people a great favor and if their oil reserves will help us during this period of transition from a world of cheap oil to one of expensive oil and new energy technologies. I'm hoping for the best but not really expecting it.

It may have been Reagan who popularized the trickle-down economy, where the wealthy receive tax breaks which encourages them to create jobs for the "working class." The Saudi Arabian system of huge oil revenues belonging to the princes, results in similar trickling down to the working class - I'm not a big supporter of either "scheme."

It's possible the only way the US will survive is for it to force its will on its citizens and other nations alike. When people riot because they can't pay for gasoline or heat and their taxes are through the roof, will there be an executive order to round them up? Will we use our military to obtain the oil that others have and *we must have*?"

Some Americans decided the Iraqis *owe us* oil... after all, didn't we liberate them? Come to think of it, aren't there other oil-rich countries that *need* to be liberated... sounds like a growth industry

to me! You could survey the Iraqis about their feeling and depending on who you ask, you'll get whatever result you want but there's no way to ask the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis killed since the invasion.

I've heard it said that our country's success is based on cheap energy, I would go a little further and say we're based on cheap everything and the willingness to obtain it anyway possible. Historically slavery and cheap immigrant labor have been as much the basis of our economy, as cheap oil, free timber and *thanks* to the Indian's - free land.

Many American's who say we can't afford to convert to clean energy, are willing to approve trillions for oil wars. I guess they consider it a better way

to investment in *energy independence*... after all he who controls the oil, can consume all he wants!

The explanation some give for our actions in the middle east is that we're doing God's work... I hope they're right, if not we may be doing the devils.

### Order or Chaos?

"We're always just nine meals away from anarchy"... Lord Cameron

Its interesting how the two things we need the most - water and oxygen, are among the most destructive substances on earth. In the form of rust and oxidation, they reduce everything they come in contact with to debris.

The concept of "orderliness" is largely a myth, chaos always lurks around the corner and things inevitably fall apart!

When the "shit hits the fan", do you think computers will keep working? Do you think 911 operators will answer your calls?

Forget about buying food and fancy clothes... sadly, like the phrase WTSHTF implies, it will be utter chaos.

"My father rode a camel, I drive a Mercedes, my son drives a Land Rover, his son will drive a Land Rover but his son will ride a camel" ... Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum

Likewise...Grandpa used the telegraph, Dad a phone, we use cell phones... the kid's send text messages... will theirs use tin cans and a string?

In an emergency, experts say 10% of people keep their wits, while 80% become paralyzed with confusion and wait for an *authority figure* to lead them... I'm guessing the other 10% go completely nuts.

They say people with A.D.D. are like hunters in a farmer's world and that under certain extreme circumstances, A.D.D. would once again be advantageous. ... I wonder if chaos is that circumstance?

"What did they use before they had candles and oil lamps in Zimbabwe? Electricity!"...unknown

There's always a dark age somewhere and civilization in general may collapse but no one knows if it will in two years or two hundred. Hopefully it never happens but if so, the later the better... only then will humans have a realistic chance of successfully heading for the stars.

Since there's order in the universe, (as well as entropy, chaos and disorder), perhaps mathematical equations can explain that order, as well as the disorder. I won't take; Galileo, Newton and Einstein over Jesus but I'll take them over those who have anointed themselves to speak on his behalf, starting with the apostle Paul, right on up to the latest crop of kooks.

"Anarchy means rowdier sheep but sheep none the less"... unknown



**Reform is fantastic and should be occurring constantly. Total collapse on the other hand is horrendous and should be avoided at *almost* any cost. God help humanity if there's another dark age... hopefully our actions won't make it inevitable.**

**“When the peasants show up at the castle with their torches and pitchforks, you don't want to be in the castle”... unknown.**

**When society's in chaos, it's “every man (or woman) for himself.” That's bad, but its worse when people behave that way when society's functioning *properly*!**

**It's almost always preferable to reform than to rebel and it is never preferable to usher in chaos and anarchy. Doing so may overturn corrupt leaders but they are likely to be replace with equally corrupt leaders and war lords. Under anarchy, the technologies we take for granted might disappear eliminating not only the comforts of civilization but also the essentials that keep us alive.**

**“Those who make peaceful revolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable.” – John F. Kennedy**

### **Patriotism**

**If I'm seen as critical of our great country, it's because we're not going to make it better by patting each other on the back... that's a recipe for disaster.**

**When your neighbor's hauled away, it's Homeland Defense.  
When you are, its oppression.**

**Is it unpatriotic to love one's country but not its government?**



## Peace

**“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God”... Matthew 5:9**

**Peace and justice go hand in hand...it’s like the soup commercial, “you can’t have one, you can’t have none, you can’t have one without the other!”**

**Son, there will be enough fights without picking any, so try to be peaceful!**

**There’s plenty of hope for mankind’s survival but less for peace on earth. Due to human nature peace would require supernatural intervention... not just meddlers masquerading as supernatural go-betweens.**

**Peace appears to be but a brief transitional phase, occurring only when we have what we want and ending, when we determine that we *must* have more.**

**When we safely harness the power of the sun, wind, tides, atoms, can feed everyone and move out into space, could there finally be peace?**

**Have people ever been able to live in peace and enjoy the right to express themselves freely? I don't think so... we've always had to belong to a clique, clan, or something whose strength affords us "protection." That protection comes at the price of sacrificing a degree of freedom and individuality... like it or not, we usually accept the *necessary* sacrifices.**

**As long as there's life there will be death. As long as there's pleasure, there'll be pain and as long as there're people, there'll be conflict... duh.**

**To some extent, we're like sharks, doing whatever's necessary to survive. I've heard that some sharks eat their siblings en utero – at least we don't do that!**

**Sadly people are more likely to have the "opportunity" to destroy life than preserve it. We can join the military and "legally" kill the "enemy" but unless you're a doctor, nurse or medic how often do you get the chance to save someone? If you ever get that chance take it! Don't worry if the person's a friend or an enemy...saving a life must be thrilling and a badge of honor no matter who it is! Hardly anyone's life ever needs to be taken, yet we cull each other like we're cutting grass!**

**If a person is so talented as to be capable of tremendous good, they're also capable of tremendous harm. The same applies to nations, both should be encouraged to do good and prevented when possible from running amok.**

**As much as possible, your agenda should be yours and mine should be mine... let's stop shoving them down each other's throats! The only thing we should be able to force is peace.**

## Peer Pressure

**“Repeat after me... I promise to be different, I promise to be unique... I promise not to repeat what other people say.” - Steve Martin’s Non-Conformist’s Oath**

We’re taught to stand up for what we believe in but eventually it becomes clear we’re to do so only if we believe in the “right things.” We’re given some leeway but there’re certain *core* beliefs we’re expected to espouse no matter what. If not, we’re advised to keep our mouths shut and failing that we risk facing *the music*.

You can conform and be given a measure of acceptance or resist and *earn* a measure of respect. The latter is more difficult but you might feel better in the long run... if there is one.

Where does *wiring* end and peer pressure begin? Why do we feel we have to be *knuckle heads* when we’re with *the guys*? The *leader of the pack*’s usually the biggest jerk of all but we seem helpless against his super-powers.

Don’t settle for being *the person you’re known as* - I’m known for having a sweet tooth but hope that’s not my legacy!

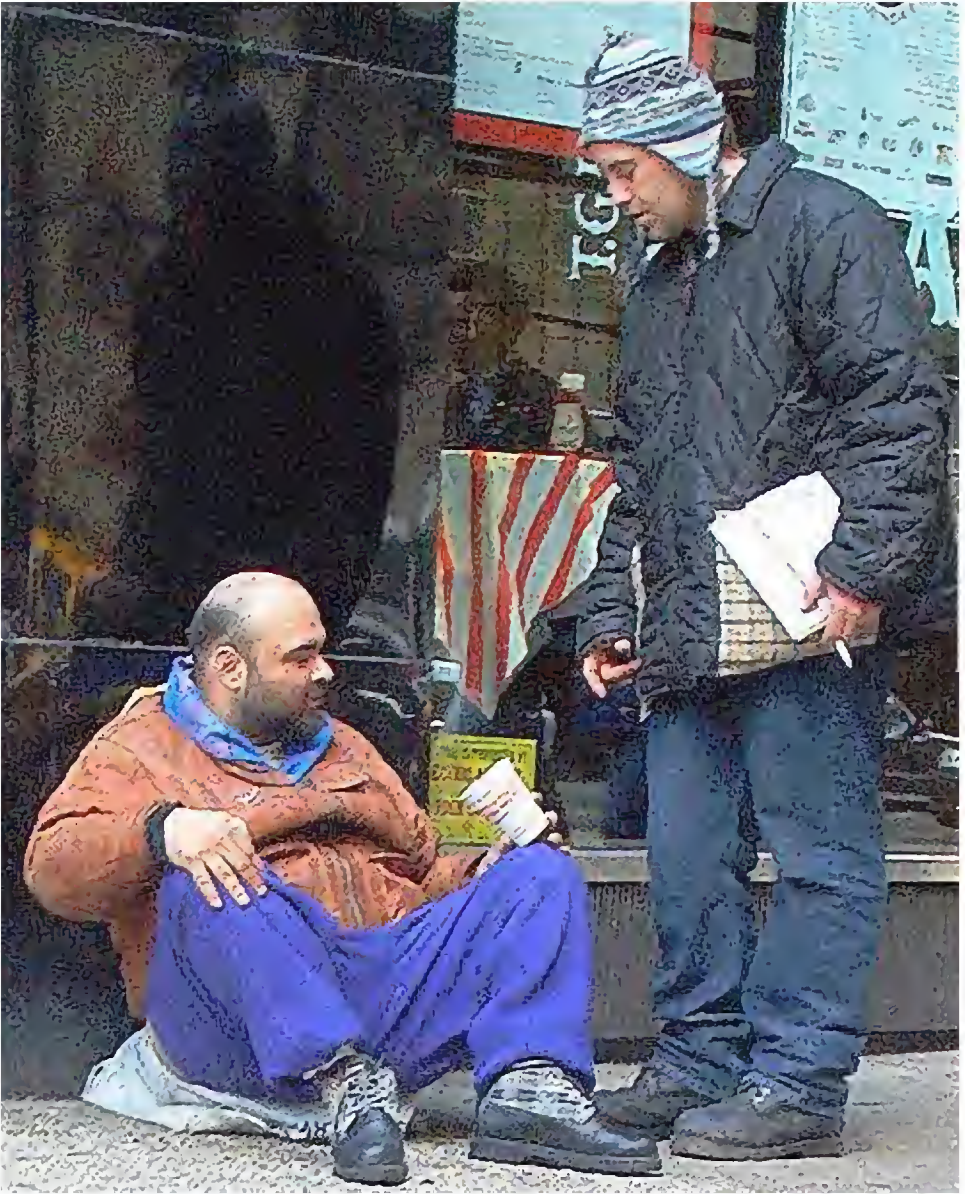
Peer pressure’s one of the most *educational* forces in our lives. People with an agenda find it valuable for "getting people off the fence" and addicts employ it to entice others to share the misery. Those who master its use usually win the day... especially when the contestants are *impressionable* young people.

There’re many reasons that peer pressure is so effective, especially with the young. They want to fit in, prove they’re cool or tough and have no idea how damaging blind allegiance can be.

Admit it or not, most adults are interested in influencing young people. Some use the direct approach, some speak in riddles and others are even more "discreet."

**Where do our young people learn negative behaviors? For starters, they're human and humans aren't taught to think, as much as they're taught what to think. Whether it's work, school or anywhere else, most people don't want to make waves... we pretty much do what the "alphas" tell us to.**

**I received curious looks as I cut the lawn with my "Leave It to Beaver" lawn mower. Friends called it ridiculous and asked, "why don't you buy a real mower?" I explained it's tiny yard, no one's going to steal it and it *starts every time!* That didn't fly and I was a woose for not using at Briggs & Stratton to cut my postage stamp. In the end they were partly right and I gave up... the darn thing couldn't cut dandelions!**



New York City

Those who claim they aren't concerned about being judged on appearances, haven't been judged or've been judged favorably... the rest of humanity has *felt the wrath* and admit it or not, we're concerned.

At the “guys retreat” I learned that real men don’t; wipe their feet, use exhaust fans, pick up trash or say they’re sorry!

There’re so many reasons not to excessively eat, drink and medicate but peer pressure *rules* and we end up fat, addicted or dead to soon.

I’ve given my kids, bad advice and bad examples but they’re resilient so there’s a chance they’ll survive or even flourish...at least I hope so!

I’ve yet to meet anyone who’s not *somewhat* “brainwashed” by their; upbringing, education, religion or the media.

At what point do aspirations become "delusions of grandeur?" I think the line is in the sand’s where your ideas clash with those around you. As long as your aspirations jive with the mainstream you’re applauded. When you are at odds with the majority, you can go from being commended to being apprehended!

Vote with your remote! Don’t support things you find offensive, monitor what your children watch but don’t go overboard. Watching what they watch is informative and can help you counter what’s being drummed in their heads. Reacting angrily tends to play into the garbage purveyor’s plans. You’re fighting a psychological war where frontal assaults can have the opposite effect of which you desire.

Our boys are influenced if not ruled by; peer pressure, testosterone and machismo. They’re also influenced by the news, movies and music, making the *bill of goods* they’re buying an ugly picture. Many are “conflicted”, since they’re alternately taught to “turn the other cheek” and “take no prisoners.” They end up unsure if they should walk the walk, or just talk the talk.

“Where the crowd runs, run in the opposite direction and you’ll probably be right”... Nietzsche



## Police

**“We live in an age when pizza gets to your home before the police”... Jeff Marder**

**Of course I live in a police state... I’m married☺☹**



**Police are a *necessary evil* and by no means evil all the time... just often enough to tarnish their reputation.**

**As long as you’re intent on turning America into a police state, why not make it one that helps hard working people, instead of those living off the “generosity” of the taxpayers.**

**Humans are the only creatures that don't trust their instincts. Can you imagine what would happen if Deer ignored theirs? Rely on yours too... *just* in case the police aren’t around when you need them. You know what they say, when you need a cop in seconds, they’ll be there in minutes.**



I see police carrying automatic weapons and apparently it makes us feel secure. Modern society prefers a few *authorized* individuals carrying massive firepower to Joe six-pack carrying any heat whatsoever.

## Politics

“Limit politicians to two terms. One in office and one in jail”... unknown.

The fact that we have third-party candidates is a joke... when's the last time one was elected dog catcher, much less senator or president? You have to be part of the machine no matter what you're running for!

I've never felt represented by any politicians... maybe that's why I complain so much!

“The difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time congress meets”... Will Rogers

Death and taxes is as certain for man, as *feeding the Lions* is for Zebra.

I don't particularly care which party's in power, because I can't predict which will treat me better, so I hope for the best and plan for the worst.

If we're rounded up and *sent to camp*, it will have little effect on our politics. We'll continue blaming the "other" party for our problems and eventually convert to whichever side gives away more perks.

I was waiting to see what the new president's policies were before applauding or criticizing too much. I wondered if the new administration would feed my ox or gore it but he's decided to cut

to the chase and give it to someone who deserves it more than us... who would've thunk it!

"Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm"... James Madison

We're quick to criticize the *other* party but not our country...that would be crossing the line.

Liberals, conservatives, independents... everyone uses the same tactics. The ability to organize, agitate and cause mischief on a massive scale is what separates us from the beasts! Not surprisingly, each group believes *it's* the only one with a worthy cause.

Being *unaffiliated*, I have different views than my friends and the option to change them... they must defend the *party platform* to the bitter end.

Caroline Kennedy wanted to be *appointed* to the Senate, where she would replace Hillary Clinton who got there largely by virtue of being a former first lady. Her main rival was the son of the former Governor, so am I detecting a pattern? Why not bestow titles like Duke and Duchess since we already have nobility here... nepotism is alive and well!

Watching the president in his State of the Union Address, I wondered... how did this guy get elected? Then I remembered – he stole the thing!

Is it just me, or are we turning into a country full of; lying politicians, predatory lenders and speed traps? I guess the rich have to maintain the status quo somehow.

Politicians aren't really into fixing things, they're into "fixing" things. No *solutions* just *fixes*. So things are constantly "fixed" but seldom repaired.

There's a reference in Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four to the "Two Minute Hate." Similar *rallies* have been a part of humanity since time immemorial and we're seeing more of them than ever!

Just because one party's probably wrong, doesn't mean the other one's probably right.

### Poverty

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"... 2 Thessalonians 3:10

The *social safety net* has become ridiculous... it's a cornucopia of freebies for the Grasshoppers, courtesy of the Ants.

I saw a construction worker's body on the side of the road... his death never made the front page. When the rich and famous die, its front page news... for the rest, it's a few lines way back on the obituary page.

Hardworking taxpayers are constantly fighting to hold on to the fruits of their labor. Meanwhile the welfare state constantly increases its *membership* along with the number of bureaucrats and related profiteers.

The widow's mite is one thing but is there a point where compassion should be tempered with displeasure for those gaming the system? There'd better be the realization that there's a point when *needs* end and *freeloading* begin.

The Bible says, "render unto Caesar what is Caesars's" but due to the government's insatiable greed, citizens have the right to say enough is enough. So get mad at Washington and stop worrying about being thrown to the Lions...

What's the welfare state but *serfdom* with a color TV? The sad thing is, more and more people are opting for it.

"The financial policy of the welfare state requires that there be no way for the owners of wealth to protect themselves" ... Alan Greenspan

I suppose it's worth asking why *shouldn't* people simply enjoy material things? We're only here for about 70 years and if we don't have "lofty" goals, maybe there's nothing wrong with simply indulge one's earthly desires.

It's difficult to *foresee* anything but increased socialism, poverty and dependence on the government. One good thing for the powerful, is that impoverished citizens make decent soldiers. They're smart enough to operate war machines and thanks to the violence in our culture, desensitized enough to perform like robots.

This is the dilemma, do you let the bums on the inside destroy your country or the barbarians at the gate do it. Obviously neither if you can help it. One reason society allows so many bums to eat off the taxpayers plate, is that the rich need cannon fodder for their wars so *even* poor folk come in "handy."

Bill and Melinda have earmarked \$ 10 billion to vaccinate poor people the world over... I hope they've earmarked the same amount to feed them, or will that be up to the American taxpayer.

If the destitute don't acknowledge and address their problems, they'll never pull themselves out of poverty and the people on the outside trying to help will eventually be replaced by those they're trying to save.

The common man is sometimes *put to work* killing people and the rich *benefit* from this dirty work but keep their hands - if not his consciences clean. The establishments' job is to convince the *little man* that killing "certain people" is moral and needs to be done and it's a lousy system. The little man is expended as necessary to keep the rich in fancy homes and secure jobs.

**I don't mind income re-distribution as long as you only do it with yours!**

Taking it from middle class tax payers and giving to people who disdain hard work and education isn't just a crime, it's also ineffective and unsustainable. If you want to take it from the *super-rich*, go ahead and try... but be forewarned, they hold on to money like grim death!

Seventy percent of Americans reportedly live paycheck to paycheck and the experts say don't take financial advice from the destitute. My broke friend says only the poor are honest. Looking at it objectively I think there're rich crooks and poor crooks.

Cooks, hairdressers, roofers and many are like well-oiled machines and a marvel to watch, but they make a pittance compared to Wall. You make more using your head than your hands and political donations from the rich has led to a playing field that isn't even remotely level... heck it's freaking vertical!

If knowledge is power and power corrupts, does it mean knowledgeable people are the most corrupt?

**"You can always hire half the poor to kill the other half"... Streets of New York.**

The homeless, indigent and panhandlers frequently suffer from substance abuse, which in America is often a crime. We incarcerates addicts, or leave them on the street but rarely rehabilitate them. Meanwhile, the public's subjected to panhandling and crime at the hands of the destitute. If we do nothing to help them overcome substance abuse there's little chance for progress... it's a classic vicious circle

Kindness is great but vigilance and preparedness are important too ... especially if you want to be around to *be* kind to others.

Should the *advantaged* be disadvantaged, to advantage the *disadvantaged*? Should we raise taxes on the middle class to give more to the poor?

**"When you subsidize poverty and failure, you get more of both."- J.D. Davidson, National Taxpayers Union**

## Power

**“Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad with power”  
... Charles Beard**

**What's worse? Somebody ruling because they're stronger or they're smarter than you... actually both stink.**

**Are the CEOs, financiers and politicians who run our lives today, anymore benevolent than princes and kings of the past?**

**It's a fine thing to protect our nation but it's wrong to think you're justified in doing anything you want in the process.**

**It's been said, "God created man but Sam Colt made us all equal." Certainly Sam Colt made us more equal but the first caveman to bash a bully with a club also deserves credit. Ingenuity evens the odds... just look at David and Goliath!**

**We don't like bullies, unless they're on our side... then we call them champions. Sometimes the only difference between a bully and a champion, is whose interest they're protecting.**

**Many *strong men* develop their bodies because they don't want to be bullied, but many become exactly that!**

**Intimidation's a common strategy among animals as well as humans. Beasts however are less likely to *cross the line* than we are.**

**Mob rule would be worse than domination by the rich -- which is what we have now. Moderates should *run the show* but such people are portrayed as “lukewarm” and lose to leaders who're enchanting. It's easier to attract followers if you're fanatical than rational.**

**Our foreign policy of “beating them into submission”, isn't much different than some peoples philosophy regarding personal relationships.**



**Post Office, Sherman, IND**

"Those in power write history and those who suffer write the songs" -- Irish saying.

I'm for an individual's right to be as *sovereign* as possible but it's a losing battle when faced by societies that demand we be spokes in a wheel, or bees in a hive.

Like the Land of Oz, wizards are behind the curtain frantically pulling levers but they're losing the battle. They know what their goals are but greed gets in their way... meanwhile, humanity suffers at their hands.

Comedian Tom Lehrer said, "Might makes right, no matter what the fight" and dictator Mao Tse Tung said "Political power comes from the barrel of a gun" ... the difference is Lehrer was a comedian and Mao should have been.

For hundreds of years, a few men in the west, have essentially ruled the world. Now they face competition from men and women all over the world... you can be sure of one thing, the *old boys club* isn't happy!

Human history's been one long battle between elites from different societies. Most of the dying's been done by minions aspiring to become part of the elite but who end up cannon fodder instead.

Dictator – *dictatress*... wow it didn't trigger the "spell checker", I guess it's a bona fide word!

So, who are the ultimate pawns - poor men, poor women, or some other class? While the poor are undoubtedly exploited, they're by no means powerless... just outgunned and disorganized.

"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men" ... Lord Acton



## Presidents of the United States

George Washington reportedly suggested the president be addressed as, "His High and Mightiness" but accepted "Mr. President" instead.... hmmm.

George Washington's birthday is no longer a separate holiday, instead he shares "Presidents' Day", with the rest of the rogues gallery. That's too bad, because despite his shortcomings, he was greater than most of our presidents. That brings to mind the question of whether our founders were great, or just greedy? I think they were somewhere in between... We're told it was principles not profit that motivated them... but I'm not so sure. Many were slaveholders, making their fortunes from the forced labor of exploited Africans. On the other hand they did risk their lives and fortunes for what they believed in... a good part of which is very inspiring stuff!

One year, George Washington produced 11,000 gallons of Whiskey at Mt. Vernon, making him the largest distiller in America. Some years, he and Thomas Jefferson reportedly paid their taxes with hemp... I don't think that would fly now... but there's talk☺

The more I learn about Thomas Jefferson, the less I like him... he may have been the most hypocritical of the founding fathers... but your research might turn up different results.

"Did you know that all 43 U.S. presidents have carried European royal bloodlines into office? ... Nineteen of them directly descended from King Edward III of England. In fact, the presidential candidate with the most royal genes has won every single American election"... this according to Burke's Peerage. So, have we simply traded old kings for new ones, or is this just the mathematics of population growth and the fact that so many American's are of European descent?

**What is the Secret Service, if not our own version of the Praetorian Guard?**

**In *days of old*, those who did the King's dirty work became *noblemen* and were rewarded with titles and land. Today such men are called General or Ambassador and rewarded with appointments, money and land... the more things change, the more they stay the same!**

**It's a bit scary that every Tom, Dick and Harry I know has decided to buy a 9mm. Though not entirely attributable to the last election, it was the final straw for many of them. If the #%@\*! hits the fan, will they sell their guns cheap, or use them to *appropriate* their necessities.**

**The President faces economic, geopolitical and environmental problems and I hope it works out but I'm more concerned with my own quandaries. Like the President, we attempt to solve our problems with the limited resources at hand... unlike him, we can't make money out of thin air.**

**Why have we allowed our presidents to become Imperial rulers? During their four or eight year reigns, they wield more power than mad King George ever dreamed of!**

## **Quips**

**All I can say about today... which is a Monday, is it's certainly living up to its name!**

**Ever notice the tar lines on asphalt roads and can you imagine being the guy who *dribbles* it into hundreds of cracks to maintain our roads. These unsung heroes are rarely seen, their work appearing overnight like crop circles. It's cool though and our older roads with their tar lines, look like living, breathing organisms. I want to be the guy making those lines... but only one shift.**

**Just wondering... would a Taser work on someone wearing rubber underwear?**

**Today I got another butcher shop haircut. Truthfully I wanted to be in and out in 10 minutes and since she accomplished that I gave her a decent tip.**

**You imply I'm a good egg but a bad seed... thanks a lot!**

**There he sat in the intergalactic prison, happy that a fly was buzzing around his face. He'd hated bugs all his life but it was nice to see another Earthling... a mouse would really make his day!**

**" I like hammering nails and speaking in tongues, Cause it doesn't remind me of anything... "... Audio Slave.**

**It's easier to forgive than to forget...that might require a lobotomy.**

**Why is it that lately everything I do's a fiasco and/or a disaster... it's also one of those days when I can't get the shrimp out of its tail.**

**Is it strange that I can't find what I'm looking for, till I stop looking... or is that's a universal experience?**

**"Are you working, or lurking", I asked..."no, just out doing nefarious and sundry things", he replied.**

**I suffer from chronic conditions; pain, anguish and joy – the funny thing is, they're inexorably intertwined.**

**Socks are sketchy, ridiculous products and their inventor should be whooped. You buy a pair and a week later it has holes... it's scandalous! We should boycott socks and go around bare footed until they invent something that wears like iron.**

**You know you're bored, when you're looking forward to reviewing the contents of your spam folder.**

**It occurs to me that garbage trucks must compact the heck out of trash—how else can they get the entire neighborhood's refuse into one truck?**

**Having a tattoo used to mean you were a sailor and had seen the world... now it means you've been to the mall.**

**Is there anybody else out there still using the word "fuzz" for cops? Just curious, because it was common in the 70s but now it would be silly.**

**Does anybody remember the smell of pencil shavings in grade school? It's a disappearing aroma but one many of us were familiar with.**

**Why does folding shirts and putting them in a suitcase, bring to mind putting a body in a coffin?**

**It's nice to know there were over 40 attempts on Hitler's life... but how could so many assassins have failed?**

**Does anybody remember when Band-Aid packages had red threads to help them open? That was once state-of-the-art but it's gone completely by the wayside.**



NYC of course

They built a new fire station here and named it station 133... funny, there're only five stations in the whole town... why do they feel they have to exaggerate?

The saying, "clean as a whistle" makes perfect sense... who wants to put their mouth on a dirty one?

Frequently I'm left speechless... other times, I wish I'd been!

### Regrets

"A man isn't old until regrets take the place of dreams"... John Barrymore

"Sometimes I lie awake at night and ask, 'Where have I gone wrong?' Then a voice says to me, 'This is going to take more than one night.'" ... Charles M. Schulz

If I had a dime for each regret I'd be able to buy you dinner but not a fancy one... not yet, anyway!

I admit having *a few* regrets... I'm just trying to avoid dwelling on them.

I like to say that *in the time remaining* things are going to change, but I'm a big talker so time will tell.

There're times in life when things could "go either way." If we're lucky we teeter but don't fall, which is about all that separates us from those who take the nasty plunge.

Have you ever *looked around* and said "is this really my freaking life?" I have... and the only *upside*, is it's better than the alternative!

Should I admit my screw ups or try and hide them? Actually I do both, but mostly the latter.

**I've stuck my foot in my mouth so many times, I need a shoe horn. Foot in mouth disease results from thinking too little and talking too much. My eventual remarks annoy, offend and irritate... Mark Twain put it nicely – look it up!**

**Agreed... I do lots of stupid things... we just don't agree on exactly what they are. Of course, your list of the stupid things I've done is longer than mine.**

**Why is it I spend half my time “straightening out” what I do the other half?**

**It's been said, many of us miss the point of our own lives and the *story we tell* isn't really what we're about.**

**"I'm not what I want to be, not what I ought to be, not what I'm going to be - but I'm thankful that I'm not what I used to be"...  
John wooden**

## **Renting**

**So what came first... the slum lord or the slum renter?**

**Landlords get tired of all the excuses, "you've been so good to me... I'm going to pay you everything I owe, if it's the last thing I do." They'd actually be funny if they didn't cost us so much. I hate to think of all the grandmas who've “died” on rent day... and don't get me started on all the houses trashed after kind words. Landlords are despised and sometimes I've deserved to be, but that begs the question *what came first the chicken or the egg?***

**Fixing houses for sale is Morty's method of selling clothes, the secret's *cheap materials and poor lighting!***

**After the renters “left” I found the usual stuff... as well as dog poop, especially in the garage but they didn't forget to leave some in the house either.**

A percentage of renters realize that with the housing crisis there're lots of investors buying foreclosed houses and converting them to rentals. This segment of the market, has gamed landlords half their lives and see a golden opportunity to jump from house to house without paying... I feel sorry for the rookie landlords, at least the nice ones.

Painting the rental house I feel a bit like Michelangelo... I'm hardly a master but I'm trying to do the best I can with *brush and roller*. Whether it's cutting in or rolling, I try to get the most bang for my buck. But like a dummy, I bought cheap paint and due to poor coverage, I have to paint some rooms twice!

It's amazing how many mops and brooms I find... my renters always buy cleaning supplies, they just never use them!

I'm trying to get out of the landlord business... it's a pain in the neck and I'm usually either too nice, or a jerk. When I'm too nice it's usually to the jerks and when I'm the jerk, it's usually to nice renters... what's wrong with this picture?





I've had two kinds of renters, those who can afford to stay but don't want to and those who can't afford to stay but plan to anyway.

I'm trying to rent this apartment but everyone whose come to look, seems to be a drunk, an addict or looking to offload a troublesome relative. I don't know if it's a sign of the times or I just haven't fixed up the place enough to attract a "better class" of renter.

When housing's subsidized overseas, even freeloaders are critical and call it socialism but when they don't pay me their rent here, they call it social justice or "getting even with the man"... hmmm?

By the time I was done cleaning the fridge and oven, I'd used a variety of oven and bathroom cleaner, laundry spot remover,

dishwashing detergent, even a fork. An unconventional approach but they ended up looking pretty darn good in the end!

## Respect

“Never take a person's dignity: it is worth everything to them and nothing to you”...Frank Barron

Treat people with kindness and respect and insist on receiving the same. If you are not treated with these, don't get upset or *even*, instead look for other's to hang out with, who will give you the respect you deserve.

Disrespect is a lack of consideration for another person's feelings. Nobody likes to be treated that way and can't be made up for with presents.

Everyone deserves respect but we tend to spend too much time moaning about how we've lost respect for *so and so* and that's a waste of breath!

## Rome

**Rome wasn't built in a day but it was burnt in one...**

America's a great country but I wouldn't automatically call it the greatest any more than Rome was the greatest country in the ancient world. Both are or were the most powerful of their times but greatness depends on one's definition and power is far from the only thing that matters.

Julius Caesar's conquests of Gaul and other areas were despicable and he killed millions of people for his own political gains. Still he's honored, while those who opposed and were murdered by him are forgotten... of course it was Caesar's cronies who wrote the book not Alaric's.

Like Rome, will our success be our downfall? Will world trade allow disease to cross our borders and will uncontrolled

immigration overwhelm *us*? Romans, like American's, considered their country to be the "mother of the world" but like Mother Rome, we may also have a termin illness.

We like violent sports but being *more civilized* than the ancients, we don't want to see our athletes killed. We like them staggered or knocked out, but most fans don't want to go back to the days of *thumbs down*.

America has people from almost every country in the world living here, which is similar to ancient Rome. Rome had citizens, residents and slaves from all over *the empire*. We're a lot like them... and that's what worries me!

On the evening news the anchor said, "now let's go to our correspondent across the pond." Just as Rome considered the Mediterranean it's "lake", America considers the seven seas it's *ponds*.

I think we're closer to a one world government than we've ever been and that government is "US." Not even Rome at its peak was as powerful as US has been the last couple of decades. While we're not an evil empire, our *elitist* leader's motives are just as suspect as Rome's.

What happened to Greece? They were a superpower of the ancient world but unlike Rome, which *as* Italy is still economically viable, Greece has fallen from the heights it reached in antiquity to an economically insignificant country. Despite its early embrace of democracy, Greece didn't follow the same course as Rome or Britain... it seems instead to have followed in the footsteps of other empires that declined and never recovered and that model's the more common one.

My friends believe we're the greatest civilization ever, that God's on our side and the world should be reshaped *in our image*. I just wonder if history will show us to be anything more than the latest incarnation of Rome?

## Secrets

**“Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead”... Benjamin Franklin**

**There're things we tell no one and other's we couldn't keep to ourselves no matter what!**

**Despite intending to be *closed lipped*, I usually tell “one person too many” and my attempt at secrecy instead becomes an advertisement.**

**If you record a thought, it solidifies and is no longer *just* a passing thought. But be careful, anything you tell *someone* is eventually known by everyone. Someone may ferret it out, or *someone* may sing like a Canary. Pressure, reward or for the heck of it, people to unlock the safe!**

**Please don't tell me secrets, it's a burden I can't bear! I'd rather hear it through the grapevine, where it's just as juicy and won't get me in trouble. When I'm told a secret, I end up in hot water for spilling the beans and sometimes for not spilling them.**

**I don't mind saying my piece on occasion, but oftne there's a definite down side to opining and I *try* to stifle myself.**

**Does the fact that it's so hard to keep a secret mean that “squealing” is a useful evolutionary adaptation?**

**“If you reveal your secrets to the wind you shouldn't blame the wind for revealing them to the trees”... Kahlil Gibran**

## Sitting on the Fence

**"Sitting on the fence is a dangerous course - you can even catch a bullet from the peacekeeping force"... Dire Straits.**

**There're lots of reasons to get off the fence... and many reasons not to casually enter the fray. There're always prophets,**

demagogues and war mongers calling for soldiers but be careful, their motive is power and you're just silage.

Sure get off the fence... but not until *you* decide which side to be on. They're not selling you a car, they're ordering you to take or give blood, so don't give in too easy.

If you're unconvinced by either side, gird your loins, head for the hills and await deliverance from the *war pigs*. You may be the ones *left* to rebuild.

Politicians and demagogues court the *swing vote*, doing their best to sway people with bogus arguments. *Villains* don't advance their agendas gently or logically, they rely on emotional appeals that *target* our basic instincts.



**I'm not on the fence, just unaffiliated and that's different than being on the fence.**

**“The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in times of great moral crises maintain their neutrality”...Dante Alighieri. He may have a point but don't let Dante or anyone else define of *great moral crisis* for you. Your life's too important, so don't copy off Dante or anyone else's paper, take *the test* yourself!**

**When there're two misguided *teams on the field*, the fence may actually be a good place. From there you can watch their antics and decide on your own terms, whether or not to join the fray.**

**"And if you choose not to decide you still have made a choice"...  
Rush.**

**I'm accused of being indecisive but willingness to change one's mind isn't a weakness in my view. Issues aren't always as *black and white* as some would have you think. Give them extensive thought...contemplation is only considered weak by those convinced that they alone have the answers. Forfeiting the right to make your own decision is the real weakness!**

**Calling someone a “fence sitter” is like calling them a coward, it touches a raw nerve, insults one's masculinity and pushes the peer pressure button. There's not a darn thing wrong with sitting on the and watching the crazies play on the killing fields they so adore. Keep your powder dry, because sooner or later they'll need a new game and a new opponent.**

**"Forward he cried from the rear and the front rank died"... Pink Floyd.**

### **Smoking**

**“It's easy to quit smoking, I've done it hundreds of times!”...  
Mark Twain**

I keep lighters and matches up high, out of reach of children and my wife, because she might dispose of them for my own good.

My wife doesn't like to kiss me when I've been smoking cigars but we only kiss once a week anyway – a guy's got to do something the rest of the time!

Smoked a cigar in my wife's car, ate two of my daughters *reserved* cookies and finished off the last marshmallow "Peep" and that my friend is par for the course!

A woman and her daughter were watching from next car as I enjoyed a Churchill and I wonder if they were repulsed. I keep thinking of reasons not to smoke cigars but the little *imp* that lives on shoulders keeps saying, "do it, do it!"

One cool thing about keeping a stogie lit is that you're practicing what men have done for eons...the art of keeping an ember alive.

I have to stop using *roach clips*... no matter how much these stogies cost. There's a reason you throw them away when they get too small to hold..., it's not worth burning holes in your lungs any sooner than *you have to*!

She asks how many cigars I smoke per week and I say I don't know. I'm a guy, aren't I supposed to have bad habits? And how do you know how much cigar to smoke...you smoke till there's ashes on your lap.

I'm discovering that one of the requirements for effectively lighting a cigar, is having a decent lighter. The four I from the dollar store, weren't worth the buck I paid. They may be okay for cigarettes but they only light cigars under *ideal* conditions.

The "Italia", tastes like chocolate and I didn't like it at first but now it's my favorite. You pay three times as much for a hand rolled cigar but they last twice as long so you get what you pay for, although there is a point of diminishing returns.

Heat rises but cigars burn from the bottom of the cherry so keep that in mind when trying for an even burn. You can enjoy an \$ 8 cigar a lot longer than an \$ 8 cocktail but the combo's even better... or worse depending on how you look at it.

The soggy Cohiba's been drying out for a few days and may be "getting there", meanwhile Agnetha's singing "P & B" and getting ready to say *coax* and *cajole* like now one else.

I learned a new trick today about relighting stogies... you light the wrapper, not the carbon, works like a charm!

I don't inhale cigar smoke, just puff them... does that mean they're killing me slowly?

I have plenty of reasons to get up in the morning...sushi, beer, cigars and oh yeah, friends!

I enjoy the forbidden Cuban, aware that if it were legal I'd be hooked. There's nothing like starting the day with a soak, a cup of Joe and a contraband stogie! Later, the resin in my nostrils is *reactivated* and I'm reminded of the pleasure the cigar provided. I'm also reminded of the addiction potential of the nicotine and desire more... if it were legal on this side of the border, I'd have one more monkey on my back.

"Sooner or later, everyone stops smoking"... unknown.





Columbus, IN

### Society

**“The danger of the past was that men became slaves. The danger of the future is that man may become robots”...Erich Fromm**

**Society needs all kinds of members and as long as we fill a niche we're *valued*. Society needs; workers, soldiers, nurses, salesmen and rulers... sounds like a bee hive! If you make a *contribution*, you're kept on the payroll. If not, you're frowned on but so long as you don't rock the boat, you're still eligible for a free lunch.**

**Whether it's the African plains, selling widgets, or being a single parent, survival of the fittest is at play. The difference is that on the Serengeti, there're no bailouts or welfare... in human society there're both... the question is, how long can they be sustained without bankrupting the country?**

**Is it better to be in the vanguard, ahead of the curve or does it even matter?**

The human race, nations and society are like the stock market... they ebb and flow, rise and fall. When it appears they've "bottomed out", there's further to go and when they ascend, it's amazing to how high they soar!

It feels like the government's telling me, "don't tug on Superman's cape, don't spit in the wind, don't pull the mask off that old Lone Ranger and you don't mess around with Jim." Another words, *toe the line* but isn't it time to pull the mask off that old Lone Ranger?

"Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them"...Bill Vaughn

### Soldiers

"Soldiers generally win battles; generals get credit for them"...  
Napoleon Bonaparte

Sometimes swords can't be beaten into plow shears until their terrible work is done... but that should be the exception, not the rule. We've been *convinced* that war's the norm and *not such a bad thing*...exactly the opposite should be the case!

One type of soldier I respect as much as those who have beaten their swords into plow shears, are those who clear minefields and defuse bombs... God they're brave!

Maybe I'm over analyzing things but it is Veterans Day and I'm wondering - should there be any limit to our gratitude? I'm grateful for many of the things they have done but respectfully object to the times they've been used as special interest mercenaries... of course I'd never state that publically.

I believe soldiers are brave... *especially* those who volunteer for combat or special forces.

Unlike dead soldiers, an army can be resurrected... so as long as there're new recruits, there will be new wars.

Hundreds of thousands of young Americans are doing their "duty" the Secretary of Defense said... in other words they're following orders from their *superiors*. I wonder though in the greater scheme of things, is it more important to follow orders or your conscience? If you can do both that's fine but simply following orders from *above*, isn't necessarily the same as following orders from *on high*.

It's disturbing to watch young people play violent video war games. I'm told they're honing their skills for the future, when they'll fight for our freedom. In the past, *crack shots* with Squirrel guns adapted nicely to the M1-Garrand and helped win WWII. Today's marksmen are likely to direct drones with a joy stick and rarely fire a rifle!

Young men willing to kill at the drop of a hat have been useful to *the powers that be* since the dawn of time, which may be why that genotype's so common. Such men have helped preserve freedom but their energy has also been commandeered to wreak havoc on the innocent. Young men with little fear or conscience make some of the best soldiers... and assassins. In war, killers earn shiny medals, in peacetime they receive life sentences.

When it comes to military technology we've made great *progress*... one conscript with a Phalanx Gun could wipe out Roman legions and knights in shining armor. When it comes to saving lives however we've haven't advanced nearly as far.

Regarding post-traumatic stress disorder for returning soldiers, the Veterans Administration is doing everything it can to help "cure" the afflicted. Their methods include counseling, rationalizations and anti-depressants. It might be better for returning soldiers to ponder if they've been misused and empower them to voice instead of stifle their emotions.

Maybe the best way to cure PTSD is to beat swords into plowshares and work for more peaceful solutions. A TV show on the *art of war* raves about the sword's beauty and notes that far more skill is required to produce one, than to make a knife or ax. Plowshares aren't nearly as *pretty* as swords but overall are quite

useful to the human race. Of course we need to defend ourselves but if more time was spent planting seeds of peace, we'd spend less time reaping fields of grief.



February is “Sniper Month” on the military channel... isn’t that swell!

“If my soldiers were to begin to think, not one would remain in the ranks”... Frederick The Great

### Space Case

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step”... Lao Tzu

**Space is the place! It won't be utopian but offers infinite possibilities for replicating society's goodness while avoiding as many pitfalls as possible.**

**The Chinese space program now includes the capability to shoot down satellites... if this doesn't lead to an arms race in space, I don't know what will... but isn't that just the normal course of affairs?**

**If there're advanced aliens out there who are less violent than us, they must be watching with uneasy anticipation. I wonder if *in their councils* they've already decided what to do with us?**

**I like the name *New Chicago* for a space city, it's not original though and was coined years ago for a movie. What are some other good names? Some will be names of old cities with the word "New" in front of them, like *New Washington*, others will be entirely new and exciting words.**

**What will the star ships be called that carry pioneers to the far reaches of space... how about the Mayflower, or Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria!**

**Scientists estimate it could take 60 million years for humans to colonize the Milky Way, travelling in huge city like space ships. That may sound like a long time but relative to the age of the universe it's miniscule.**

**When the Earth finally freezes or burns to a crisp, will anybody really care? Will there be anybody left anyway, or will we have moved far into the cosmos by then? There may be a few stragglers but conditions will become unbearable centuries, or eons prior to the last earthling leaving the building and turning out the lights.**

**A simple Tomato plant in space might be cherished more than a mighty Oak on earth... haven't you seen Water World?**

**To be viable, starships will have to be large and sophisticated and it will likely be a hundred years before pilgrims attempt to *reach for the stars*. We're not ready to attempt such journeys but you**

have to start somewhere... “a journey of a thousand light years starts with one step” and all that.

Even in space there will be conflict as humans and perhaps aliens fight over real estate and resources! We’ve always congregated around fertile land and that’s been the cause of much earthly conflict. Space pioneers will have to contend with; disease, famine, war, piracy and every other affliction wrought by man and nature. So why bother colonizing space? Because as earth gets more crowded things might get worse for its inhabitants.

Is life exclusive to earth, or might any heavenly body with the right conditions also spawn life...especially if the *basic seeds* blow in its direction?

When humans travel to new lands, they look for the resources and riches they need or desire. Historically it's been fertile soil, lumber, freshwater and mineral wealth. As we travel the cosmos we will look for similar things, as well as conditions we can tolerate or modify for our survival.

It's unlikely there'll ever be a utopia and no matter who's selected they'll eventually be at each other's throats. If these are democracies, which is most desirable, the same problems we've had will again rear their ugly heads in *New Merica*.

It is unlikely there will be peace on earth as long as there're people who think their religions or ideologies are *chosen* above all others. Separating from such people is a good reason for going into space but it's also an issue to be *addressed* on earth.

Jupiter's moon Europa and Saturn's moon Enceladus are reportedly icy orbs, which can be converted into fuel, oxygen and water. Someday these moons will surely be *truck stops* or interplanetary outposts.

Mars and the moon reportedly have reserves of water that will support human life as well. Both also have deep caves which might shelter future *Neanderthals*.

So you go off to space to *escape* problems on earth but find the same problems *crop up* where ever humankind occurs. That doesn't mean it won't be worth it, in fact it will be necessary in the long run and may give us the few thousand years we need to *mature* into responsible beings!

"The Earth is just too small and fragile a basket for the human race to keep all its eggs in"... Robert Heinlein

### Sports and Extra-cise

"It's not the mountains ahead that wear us out, its the grain of sand struck in our shoe"... Anonymous

Nobody's perfect and no "body" is perfect but some come darn close... especially after a little air brushing!

The World Cup of Football is on again and I'm enjoying it... but have you ever "headed" a soccer ball? Ouch!

Walking past the golf course, I see a rare sight... people walking instead of riding golf carts. I hear clubs clattering in their bags as they amble along... far different than the sound of motorized golf carts!

Exercise... does that mean that in the old days the goal was "extra-size?" Being large was an advantage back then... extra weight was useful in a fight, or during those *lean times*.

The brain is vital when it comes to weight loss tricks, like taking a swig of mouthwash at a moment of weakness to mess up flavor and help you resist eating. Unfortunately our brains are rarely outsmarted by such tricks... so be smart and allow yourself to be outsmarted!

The mouthwash trick doesn't work all the time but sometimes it does and that's positive. If it *never* works you must not be using any willpower in which case nothing will help!

When someone insists you overindulge, consider it a challenge. It's a chance to demonstrate your ability to enjoy a reasonable serving and graciously decline their invitation to be a glutton. If they're okay with it, great – if not it's their problem... not yours.

Does anybody remember gym class being like prison? The bullies were the prison gangs and the gym teachers were guards who enjoyed watching fights not breaking them up!

A lot of men want to be "big" and I'm wondering why. Are they afraid they'll be *messed with* if they aren't *large and in charge*? Unfortunately, they don't consider the implications of being large, which includes increased risks of numerous medical conditions.

The human back is like a bridge and should be treated like one when lifting. Make contact with something so that you're a tripod instead of a dangling arch. When bending, rest your elbow or forearm on your thigh, or on something to redistribute weight...so your back doesn't do all the work. This makes what could be an injurious event a beneficial exercise. With practice your friends won't even notice and you won't have to make excuses for being sensible!

Have you ever had an itch and no way to scratch it?

Maybe they call them *dumbbells* because they don't *ring*... anyway dumbbell's a funny word!

Doing a *little better each day* may be impossible, since invariably we have our ups and downs. The trend's important and *must be your friend* if you hope to improve. Try doing more than just "one thing right" every day, because although better than nothing, that's too slow to get things done.

If nothing else, housework provides exercise and helps your wife, who's probably doing more than her share anyway. You may also be pleasantly surprised when your wife shows her appreciation... know what I mean?



**"Probably the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eaton"... George Orwell.**

### **Success (Failure)**

**"God gave us two ends. One to sit on and one to think with. Success depends on which one you use"...Unknown.**

**Forget about the stocks and real estate - our major asset's our brain and the willingness to use it.**

**There's nothing wrong with tooting your own horn, especially when other people think it's a spittoon!**

**If you want "the job", look and talk like you can do it and given the chance, you'd better be able.**

**I've heard the expression, "good little worker bees" for people who get the job done and I wonder, why do we work like bees? On Wall Street it's because of how they're compensated but others put in hard time for little pay. "Worker bees" perform, because of compensation, fear or loyalty though it's often misplaced.**

**Wifey doesn't like being called "good little worker bee", nor does she like to be honored simply for her looks...she wants to be recognized for her talent and accomplishments – hmmm, I mean duh!**

**Success in life is largely about rising to the challenge *and* resisting temptation.**

***You* were led to water and drank, the other *horses* didn't... now tired and thirsty they demand that you carry their load... what a surprise!**

**I know people who have nothing and it reminds me of the line, "freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose." They may be free but is that what they want? Others seem to be *blessed* materially but far from being free, are owned by their "stuff."**

Somewhere in the middle there's a happy medium and someday I hope to find it☺



**Nor Cal**

If you have the attitude that the deck's stacked and you can't win, then guess what?

**You can be all about winning and not be a winner, so value something other than winning and be a winner regardless of where the chips fall.**

**Use your head to make a living, in other words - think or stink. Both types of work are equally noble but the pay isn't.**

**Hang around with smart people or surround yourself with idiots and watch the stupidity rub off!**

**For most of us, life's a series of victories and defeats, some minor, some not. We improve our chances with; education, planning and hard work... but as anyone who's been around the block can tell you, there're no guarantees!**

**There's guilt by association and *value* by association... sometimes success or failure depends on who you know, or who you're related to. We can't change who we're related to but we've sizeable control over who we know and even more over who we hang out with.**

**If you spend money like there's no tomorrow, you'll find out you were right!**

**It's a waste of time to reinvent the wheel but not every good thing's been invented. If you have ingenuity use it and whether or not you're a genius, be ingenious!**

**The guy complaining about *stacked deck* is spouting a half truth and old news. Don't let bad advice restrain your ambition! If you listen to people whose words of wisdom are *you can't*, then *you won't*... but if you educate and apply yourself, you'll find out that *you can*!**

**Another essential *quality* for success is wherewithal... *without it* you're lost, *with it* anything's possible!**

**Listen *selectively*, embrace wisdom and snub nonsense. Counsel of the successful leads to success, that of the ruined leads to ruin.**

**If you want to be successful, once in a while go out on a limb!**

**Whether its business, marriage or war... *win, win* 's better than insisting on unconditional surrender.**

**With everything, a new day's another chance to do better, or worse... choose wisely!**

**Inertia's the opposite of momentum and something to be avoided. Not everything we do needs to be productive but we should avoid being counterproductive. If you want to survive tough times, summon *strong will* and learn a *marketable skill*.**

**You can be anal and prepare too much for a sales call but that's unlikely. You can also improvise but preparation trumps improvisation most of the time.**

**Is life a race to win or just to finish... or is it a race at all?**

**I'm not a great business man but no worse than those so keen on dispensing advice and being broke slows them not one bit from acting like oracles! Meanwhile the successes I know dispense little advice but their morsels are better than the vagabond's constant *nuggets*.**

**Most of us don't work terribly hard, nor are we brilliant but we're consistent, so we get the job done. Compare that to those who're lazy or inefficient and ask yourself – why should the competent subsidize them?**

**They say Lions are only successful in 5% of their hunts which sounds bad but upon ciphering its apparent I'd love to do that well when selling!**

**When you're trying to make sales, there's nothing wrong with just *going through the motions*, especially when you put a little emotion in the motions. Show up, make the presentation and the more emotion you can muster, the better!**

**We need will, intent and desire to succeed it's what separates you from those possessing *only* the *ability* to succeed.**

**To effectively prioritize you must first understand what your goals are... do you?**

**“Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently”... Henry Ford**

**Work a little, play a little, work a little more, play a little more. If you do this way, things usually work out. If you don't you're going to have problems. The Lioness sleeps then hunts, the Wolf hunts then plays... the deer pays attention or else!**

**"The road to failure begins with self-pity" ... anonymous.**

### **Surveillance Nation**

**Surveillance isn't always negative, as it can stop crime and terrorism. Unfortunately it creates digital trails of everything we do and every transaction we make. Among other misuses, isn't it just a matter of time before the IRS uses these to make sure we're all paying our *fair share*?**

**Forget the mark of the beast, driver's license photos will increasingly be used for facial recognition. Cameras catch us speeding and we're sent tickets in the mail. Emails, phone calls, mail and faxes are subject to surveillance and when we pay our taxes, the IRS can still consider our *ability to pay* suspicious and demand to know *where the money came from*!**

**We're living in a police state which is what rulers always strive for, because that's the only way they can keep us in line. So what's the alternative... anarchy and warlords -- not very appealing if you ask me! For the time being, let's tweak the system to make it better, if that doesn't work, stronger action may be required!**



### New York City

**We live in a police state that protects *some of the people, some of the time*. To keep us *safe* we're constantly surveilled and every move and transaction can be traced. Apparently with over 300 million Americans to govern, the best they can do is use ant society**

for their model and thanks to popular media and the education system, we've become a compliant herd. Meanwhile, the wizards behind the curtain still fear the masses who at any given time could rise up against their *masters*!

I'm noticing more and more women employed at security guards, which makes sense since they're excellent at surveillance. Women are famous for *keeping an eye on things*... after all, how else would they know what shenanigans their men and teens are up to!

We may be the most surveilled people in the world – between; phone and e-mail monitoring, surveillance cameras and nosey neighbors -- the government can find out everything we do. On the positive side, they rarely bother the average Joe... so if you know what's good for you, remain average!

### Think Tanks

Think tank names rely on subterfuge and deception, designed to advance their agendas. The trick is to sound; civilized, scholarly and smarter than the rest of us. Here's a good one, "The Institute for Peace"... perhaps they should add the words, "on Our Terms."

The "expert" stated that spending a dollar to fight hunger in sub-Saharan Africa, accomplishes \$40 worth of social good... while a dollar spent on the Kyoto protocol only achieves 30 cents of social good and I have to wonder how are these numbers *calculated*? Not only are the figures ridiculous, one man's *social good* is invariably another's sticking your nose in someone else's business.

Ahh, the "Center for public integrity" another impressive name for one more special interest group.

If you are right about something but violently force it on others, then even if you are right, you're wrong.

"Nonprofit" doesn't mean nonpartisan, although these organizations intentionally create confusion regarding their

objectives. Nonprofit organizations often have extreme ideological agendas cloaked in a veil of faux-compassion.

"Committed to building a more just, verdant and peaceful world", is the foundation's slogan but for whom are they building it?

Here's an amusing think tank title... "Senior Fellow". These *fellows* may indeed be senior and even *scholarly* but that doesn't mean they're anything but biased lobbyists. They're simply members of elitist groups intent on reengineering society per their *prescription*. Society can certainly be improved but the question is, whose vision of improvement will be promoted... as usual the answer is, money talks!

There is no such thing as nonpartisan... When I hear a think tank described that way, I wonder who started it in the first place? Didn't the founders have a worldview? When they state that their sole purpose is to help society I have to laugh. Helping society is subjective and a think tank's agenda is invariably biased in favor of its member's agenda.

## Time

"Time is a great teacher but unfortunately it kills all its pupils"...Louis Berlioz

Time is something we have lots of when we're young and too little of when we're old. In between, we waste this precious resource like *there's no tomorrow*.

Ever notice that little happens in the short term but *everything* happens in the long run...it's just a matter of time!

Haste makes waste whether you're getting out of the shower or exiting the freeway.

The problem with being efficient is that it leads to haste, which leads to waste... or at least stubbed toes! So slow down, it isn't



worth hurting yourself to make the boss richer and we've all heard that thing about *what you want your epitaph to be...*

Boring as it sounds, the best antidote to *haste making waste* is planning ahead!

"Men talk of killing time, while time quietly kills them"...Dion Boucicault

### Torture

"Charges of torture don't spill much beer down at the Legion Hall"... anonymous.

There're things we'll allow to be done to others, that we'd never condone being done to us.

Newspeak... torture is now "enhanced interrogation" and *occupation* is liberation.

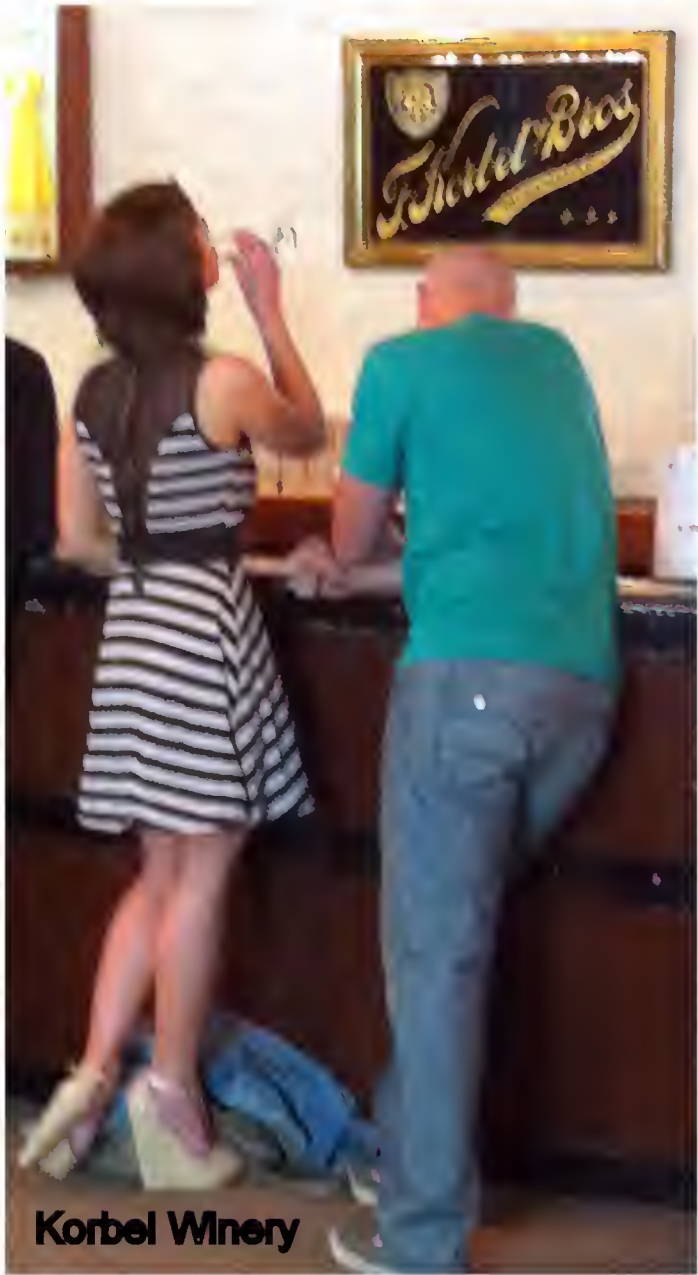
On the other hand I can't think of anyone who doesn't think, "the ends justifies the means" when a loved one or our *way of life's* at risk.

Our system isn't that different from the middle ages when inquisitors tortured *heretics*. Now they prefer water boards to racks and thumbscrews. The dirty work's still done by *contractors* and still approved by elite whose hands are still kept *clean*.

Aren't "Intelligence officers" the same guys known as inquisitors in the Middle Ages? They may have stopped burning people at the stake but they're still highly *persuasive*!

Our interrogators use; water boarding, beatings, stress positions, death threats, sleep deprivation and loud noises but rarely do anything that "leaves a mark!"

After World War II, America prosecuted Japanese war criminals for water boarding American prisoners... so how's our Karma doing?



Despite being against torture, I wouldn't oppose it if a city was threatened with annihilation and we had the people who had the bomb. On the other hand using torture as a *routine* method of extracting information is sick and apparently ineffective. What *might* be effective is addressing the root causes of the wars we've declared, be they against; terror, drugs or poverty!

Now there's a "water board" thrill ride at the amusement park... isn't that nice.

### Tradition

"Tradition is the dead governing the living"... Auguste Comte

Those who love the status quo are devoted to preserving traditions that elevate themselves and inconvenience or hold others down!

Should we resist the *traditional* obligations foisted on us during the holidays and other times? Yes, but we should also realize it's good to celebrate, give thanks and share the bounty. What we should resist is the notion that others can determine what's worth celebrating... in other words, make up your own mind!

"Every generation laughs at the old fashions but religiously follows the new"... Henry David Thoreau

### Tribes and Natives

"We will drive them along with the wild beasts to the Rocky Mountains"... Thomas Jefferson

"All the tribes tell the same story. They are surrounded on all sides, the game is destroyed or driven away; they are left to starve and there remains but one thing for them to do - fight while they can" ... General George Crook

There're national tribes, nations of tribes, tribes of nations and nations of nations. That's what diversity is all about, if we become

a world with only one tribe, diversity will be lost. Historically, tribes excelled at trading or war and some just sat on their butts. As the social engineers mold us into one tribe, which of these attributes will they nurture?

I'm not opposed to us being a nation, instead of a hodgepodge of tribes. What I'm opposed to, is bullying those countries that are tribal, instead of being a good example. Human nature being what it is...powerful nations don't edify less advanced peoples they abuse them.

Tribal societies would be better off if they joined together to protect themselves against aggressor nations but they rarely do. Nations with strong central governments, understand this weakness and take full advantage of it. Strong nations have the power to compel their bickering factions to come together for the "national good." Funny how the *national good* usually has something to do with the need to invade someone else, with the promise of good times ahead and maybe even the prospect of making a few bucks!

The north was built on the bones of exterminated natives and exploited immigrants. In the south the same occurred but much of the work was done by enslaved Africans. What goes up, must come down... no justice no peace... this just might be a law of nature.

Arguably some tribes were barbaric and deserved "what they got", especially those that practiced human sacrifice. So instead of giving the conquistadors and pilgrims an 'F', they may deserve better.

What is a nation other than a conglomeration of; clans and tribes joined together to be stronger than neighboring clans and tribes.  
*A united nation*

can defend itself against disorganized neighbors, or make war and steal their resources. Ironically, tribes tend to outlive powerful nations, which eventually fall apart from within.

I might take tribes over nations but understand their weakness when confronted by nations. Nations have great numbers, organization, an MIC sophisticated e strategies. Nations divide and conquer tribes and history has shown them to be the most effective way for TPTB to get their way.

America has lots of problems but that doesn't mean we're finished. We have a long tradition of making lemonade out of lemons and Americans are not to be trifled with, as many *tribes* and nations that can confirm.

You never know... maybe someday the Indian nations *will* return. They lost their land by force, so doesn't that mean they have the "right of return?" On the other hand those who won by conquest or paid with money believe they have title to the land so someday things could get messy. The Indians fought each other for land as well although we're told their definition of ownership was different than ours. Ultimately land almost always goes to the strong, and every tribe, nation and race has killed or died for it and property is only possessed for as long as people are strong enough to defend it.

With their natural resource wealth, native Americans might have been *wealthy* and could have prospered in whatever manner they saw fit. Instead, lagging in the science of war and divided among themselves, they effectively lost everything they *possessed*.

Western nations first developed war machines to fight each other and when they unleashed canon and ball on native American's the outcome was wholly predictable...

Hearing "Waltzing Matilda" on the radio, I wonder why don't we hear more about the Aussies extermination of that country's natives? Were they were kinder than us or did the land support fewer natives in the first place? Yes, in between stories of crocs, Wallabies and Roos we hear a little about that tragedy but what's a billabong and swagman anyway and who, pray tell was Matilda?

## Truth, Lies and Videotape

**“All great truths begin as blasphemies”...George Bernard Shaw**

**“Seeing is Just Seeing”... unknown**

**Lying with a straight face is an unfortunate quality that’s helped humans *get ahead* for a million years. Whether to friend or foe, everyone’s lied and reaped the ill-gotten *reward*...but of course we all know people who’ve *never lied*!**

**If two wrongs don’t make a right, how can - three, four or five?**

**We know *this*, we know *that*, we’re *all knowing*! I don’t know much but realize that he who claims to know everything, knows squat!**

**There’s justice and there’s *justice*...it’s sometimes poorly defined but those on the short end have a pretty good idea what they’re missing!**

**The phrases "sitting on the fence" and "the truth lies somewhere in the middle" have something in common. Both are used by the ideologues to recruit soldiers to fight for *their* agendas.**

**The powerful don't have to lie but do... the weak feel they have to lie to survive but do they?**

**For the last time...what am I supposed to believe, your mouth or my eyes?**

**So, what are actors other than convincing liars? Does that make Oscar winners the biggest liars of all, or does that dubious distinction go to certain lawyers?**

**Is it wrong to do what’s supposedly “good” when it might harm the innocent? Conversely, we’re told that sometimes you have to do harm in order to do good and is it irony when in both cases the law of unintended consequences rears its ugly head?**

**It seems true that when a lie's repeated often enough, many accept it is the truth, but is the opposite also true?**

**Are we *forced* to lie, because telling the truth can be very expensive and does that mean it's okay to lie in such cases? I'm thinking about returning things to the store and how lying can make the exchange successful...obviously I've wrestled with this before.**

**There's something wrong with our legal system if you can't enter into evidence the fact that has previously abused the legal system via frivolous lawsuits etc. If that information isn't relevant to a case than what is!**

**"Innocent until proven guilty"... that sounds like it's a foregone conclusion that you'll be found guilty... shouldn't it be "innocent unless proven guilty?" It's a catch 22, just like *pleading the fifth* is often considered an admission of guilt.**

**Meanwhile back at the courthouse, our revolving door system is absurd! Who would you rather see released back to society; a non-violent pot smoker or a violent pedophile? Chances are, they have the same chances and that's the real crime.**

**If you truly are a man of your word, you shouldn't have to advertise... chances are, the word will get around.**

**What is integrity? It's easily defined if you look in the dictionary but it's also in the eye of the beholder. A man believed to have integrity by some, can be considered a shyster by others. It depends on how he's conducted himself on various occasions and what was the outcome for the parties involved. We're back to that old bell curve... no one's a paragon of virtue all the time!**

**One person's "worthy cause" to someone else is an intrusion or invasion of privacy. The "beneficiary" of our well-intended efforts may not even agree there is a problem and may consider outsiders *solving* their problems to be the real problem. If you're going to interfere in other's affairs, you'd darn sure better be right... and that's not so easy to establish.**

**Beware...statements beginning with phrases like, “frankly speaking” and “honestly though” are often the preface to a lie.**

**I prefer living in a society of laws, as long as they are just and equitable – and therein lies the rub!**

**Peace and justice...it’s like the old Campbell’s *soup and sandwich* commercial...you can’t have one, you can’t have none, you can’t have one without the other.**

**Maybe people who claim they never lie are telling half-truths. So what do two half-truths equal... the whole truth or a whole lie?**

**"A foolish faith in authority is the worst enemy of truth"... Albert Einstein.**

**We believe so much of the nonsense we hear, because we want *certain things* to be true. I’m thinking of things that are said so “authoritatively” on TV, radio and newspapers, as well as by friends and acquaintances. When something unsubstantiated, is presented in an authoritative tone to a willing audience, it’s taken as the gospel truth. Everyone’s feeding us lines but what they say is only *their* truth not *the* truth.**

**Another evolutionary adaptation that helps us maintain our sanity, is the refusal to accept the truth about *certain things*. You could also call it "eternal hope" but whatever it is, it helps get us through some pretty tough times.**

**Now they can determine via MRI brain wave analysis if you’re telling the truth. They claim it’s more accurate than a polygraph, so why not use it in law enforcement? I have no beef with it... but like water boarding, will they eventually use it on a routine basis?**

**While it is possible that some people are almost always wrong, it’s impossible that anyone is almost always right.**

**“Truth isn’t determined by a majority vote” - Cardinal Ratzinger**





**Nor Cal**

### **TV, Media and Movies**

**"The morning disinformation break"... anonymous**

**You know you've been away from home a long time, when you forget the channels that you regularly watch. It gets confusing**

trying to remember the channels at home and those in the towns you visit.

If TV shows didn't have *laugh tracks* would we still think they're funny? I wish they'd let *us* decide what we want to laugh at! So why do they have them? Are the producers using a little *magic* to achieve their goals. We're encouraged to laugh along with the *rest of the audience* even though they're canned. If we enjoy the show we'll tune in again and be subject to the sponsor's advertising. But there may also be nefarious and sundry reasons for the track...the writers and producers use of TV shows to promote their world view. We're indoctrinated with their values and laughing along with the *track*, reinforces what's hip and proper. The more we laugh with the *track*, the more likely we are to accept their world view and gradually discard our own *antiquated* values.

I've had my fill of Meerkats on the nature channels, they may be cute and interesting to some but I'll take Lions and Tigers and Bears any day!

Other shows I'm getting tired of are Ice Road Truckers and Deadliest Catch... I don't want to see more Crab legs unless they're on a plate.

When I hear the talk radio stars spewing discord I'm turned off... but there fans are even. Hopefully they're just trying to cozy up with the host and aren't as mean as they sound. Typically all these performers will be partly wrong but they'll be forgotten and new generation of seers will have replaced them. The cycle of rabbleroxing that's been going on forever shows no sign of abating!

Headlines are what frame our debates and whoever controls the headlines, controls the debate!

We have five different remotes in our house, so my limited brain power's spent remembering where the various buttons are. Why won't they standardize these things!

Instead of being PO'd when commercials come on and I have to surf, I should be grateful. Like Jerry said, "it's not just *what's on* that we're interested in, it's *what else* is on!"

I watch the news to see the anchorwoman as much as to hear the news and for some reason the prettiest are on the business channels!

I wonder how many other guys are switching back and forth between Conan the Barbarian and 20th Century Battlefield tonight?

We've gone from citizens eager to be informed and learn, to subjects content to be entertained... the result is we're programmed with the views of our masters.

I'm not watching as much news as before... after all it's just an endless account of who's bombing who and how many have died. I keep thinking they're going to give me advance warning about when TSWHTF but all they're really saying is buy, buy, buy!

There I was rushing to finish by 6:30 so I could watch the evening news. Then it occurred to me...why risk falling off the roof, just to watch the daily propaganda session?

Some of the *heads* read us the news like we're five-year-olds. Its part of the dumbing down process... their tone of voice sounds like elementary school teachers reading to their class!

Bloomberg has a brunette business babe during the time slot that Fox business features a beautiful blonde... is each targeting a specific market segment? And let's not forget Libby on C-Span... even that staid station's gotten in on the act!

It's a slow news day and that's good... fewer people have been laid off, or blown up!

Now days, there's a lot of "breaking" news... just not much "fixing" news.

The special expires soon and I'll probably revert to the basic cable package. There'll be fewer channels, so I'll have to settle for "inferior" programming... as if I'm not already!

Two innovations for obtaining information are the radio scan and the TV remote. Without them, we're prisoners of one side or the other... if you park on one station, it will *mold you* like clay.



I don't know which is worse NPR or FOX, both of which seem biased to independents but to their core audiences, are *fair and balanced*...ha, ha, ha.

You know *they've* succeeded when even pot smokers vote for war... apparently government and corporate propaganda are stronger than THC!

It's difficult to divide and conquer when people have good information. So they've learned to prevent access, control content and divert our attention with *entertainment*.

Not only do the major networks cover the same news stories each evening, they also broadcast the same commercials. I hate to think how many times I've been solemnly advised to ask my doctor about a drug and then hastily told about certain sexual side effects!

We're watching "A Night at The Museum" and despite the *latest* special effects it's the same shtick they fed grandpa in the 20's, we the sheeple are easily entertained.

Funny, I'm watching the infomercials at five in the morning and addition to penis enlargement, how to make a million and how to lose weight... there're commercials for growing hair on men and removing it on women!

Why is it that in movies, they wrap the horse's reins once around the hitching post? Don't you lose horses that way?

## Violence

"The man who strikes first admits that his ideas have given out"...Chinese Proverb

It's said that in societies where young people perform rites of passage to become adults, violence is reduced. We have few such rites, compelling our boys to prove their manhood by joining gangs, the military or just beating the crap out of each other.

Too much time and energy is spent trying to *do something about* people, who we think are infringing on some aspect of our lives. No matter when or where people have always been at odds with

each other and too often that escalates into feeling the need to violently *doing something about it*.

The average American isn't a thug but our crime rate is higher than most developed countries. Our history is more violent than most countries and too often our society rewards aggression.

## Voting

*"It's Not the People Who Vote that Count; It's the People Who Count the Votes"...* Josef Stalin

If we'd vote with our remote and speak with our keyboard maybe things would change!

Free people need iron clad constitutional guarantees as much as they need elections. Our rights were won by a revolution, not votes and elections have disempowered us more than foreign enemies... I hope it won't require another revolution to win them back.

I won't fight for your right to vote and might not fight for my right to vote... but I will fight for our God given rights against those who are determined to "vote" away the rights that remain.

They say you have to vote for someone, otherwise you shouldn't complain about the government. Does anyone else think that's but a cunning tactic to shame us into supporting an increasingly corrupt system? It reminds me of the gang leader telling the new member, "you need to shoot him too, then you'll be one of us."

When I look at the major candidates, I wonder if we should vote for the lesser of two evils or not vote at all? For me the answer's usually tea in the harbor!

I'm criticized for not voting even when I explain that nobody represents my views. I'm told not to "throw my vote away" and to vote for *the best of the worst* or keep my mouth shut. Adding insult to injury, you want to be sure I "throw my vote" to the *right candidate*... namely yours!



Indiana

### WWW

**“The Internet is so big, so powerful and pointless that for some people it is a complete substitute for life”... Andrew Brown**

**On the net, you can discuss religion and politics relatively anonymously, which can be better than discussing them with friends... that’s like pooping where you eat.**

**According to reports, Google has kept every search its users have ever done and *may* be able to connect each one to whoever did the search via their IP address. Through the Patriot act the government can subpoena these, as can any lawyer... isn’t that nice!**

**At the UN meeting on the future of the Internet they focused on how to get more poor people around the world “connected.” Proponents say they want everyone to have access to information but I think they’re more interested in selling them *stuff*. I hope these people don't mind having everything about them entered into the merchants databases.**

**“During my service in the United States Congress, I took the initiative in creating the Internet”... Al Gore**



## Weeds and Gardens...

“Gardening requires lots of water -- most of it in the form of perspiration”... Lou Erickson

After the rain is the best time to pull weeds as they tend to fight less allowing the gardener to devastate their ranks! Even so, after 15 minutes, it's apparent they're too many and in the end they will prevail. The weeds along with their friends the mosquitoes are overwhelming and I must retreat!

Putting on gloves I chuckle at the prickly Rose canes that I'm carrying to the pit, "you guys are a joke!" Compared to the wild Multi-Flora Roses at the farm that puncture tires on a regular basis, this garden variety are Pansies☺

I would like to grow a garden with plump tomatoes and pretty flowers... but first I must kill the weeds!

What's prettier, flowers in the spring, or trees in the fall? As far as I'm concerned it's a beautiful tie!

Cottonwood seeds land by the thousands creating a mess on our deck and hot tub but I sweep them up. Thousands land on the grass where *weed and feed* kills them but hundreds successfully sprout in nooks and crannies, guaranteeing a new generation of this annoying species!

*Scots* must be desperate, their new commercial features a young man killing the dandelions because he "doesn't want to be a bad neighbor." In this down economy, dandelions are going crazy all over town as apparently people are buying less weed and feed. *Scots'* must know this therefore their desperate guilt trip appeal but it worked on me as I bought some today, but it was the store brand, *Scots* was too expensive!

The one *nice* thing about weeds is that the more successful they are, the harder it is for them to hide. There's no reason to rush



out and spray everything that sprouts. Wait until you can tell the flowers from the weeds and then give them hell!

Weeds are smart, hiding themselves among prickles and positioning themselves under the bushes where the mower can't reach. My only recourse is to dismount and pull them by hand but that's too much effort!

Mother Nature seems to love weeds and as I pull a vine off the Wegia and try to channel its seeds into a bucket, an aberrant wind comes and blows them under the bush. Next year a pesky new vine crop will sprout! Even if I could remove all the vines and berries, the birds would do their part and poop them all over the yard! Nature is one vast conspiracy against mankind, no wonder we've struggled against *her* since time immemorial.

I've struggled against the wind to keep the little Pine tree upright for three years. Currently it's supported by seven wires and looks like something from *Guliver's Travels*.

Trimming the Lilac I feel like *Edward Scissor Hands*, stepping back to appraise my work, then continuing the *haircut*. Later, Wifey who'd requested the trim not only forgot about it, when reminded she couldn't tell I'd trimmed it at all!

This is an ideal time to knock down the Hornets nest because if I get stung I'll have a *valid* excuse not to go to ballroom dancing class! On the other hand it's important to Wifey that we attend, so I must be careful. Ever since they stung me after an accidental jostle, we've been at war! I relentlessly persecute them, so far emptying three spray cans into the nest - they're greatly weakened but not dead yet!

Sitting in the tub looking at our *Arborvitae*, fruit trees and the rest, it occurs that we'll enjoy it for but a few years, while *this spot* - in one form or another will be around "forever."

While thirty years ago it was rare, mulch has become ubiquitous and available in endless types and colors... we can't seem to live without it!

Funny how cutting both the front and back results in me doing less work in the long run. Every time wifey mows she finds things that need to be trimmed, planted, sprayed and God forbid mulched!

Why would I care about getting an “A” on my lawn ... they don’t give prizes for perfection!

Running over the Apple with the mower resulted in a nice surprise... instead of being squashed, it emerged nicely peeled!

This year, I’m not pulling weeds just spraying them instead. I figure my back has just *so many* bends left and it’s time to start rationing them!

Once again I’m spraying the weeds in the same losing battle engaged in each spring. No matter what the cost, we strive to make the yard look like the neighbor’s ... only better. As usual, many flowers are falling to *friendly fire*... they're young, innocent and as in any war a certain amount of collateral damage is "acceptable."

Spring has arrived and I hear the sound of lawn mowers *singing* through the neighborhood. I guess it’s time to fire my engine, be a *good neighbor* and cut the grass!

### Winter Take all!

“In the winter it was luge lessons, in the summer we made meat helmets”... Dr. Evil

It’s just mid-November and I’ve already seen pickup trucks with snowplows on them. Either these guys are eternal optimists or they know something the weatherman doesn’t... wouldn’t that be a surprise☺

Japanese lore tells us that when worms come out of the ground in winter, an earthquake is imminent. In a thousand years, we too may know when a quake is coming and prepare accordingly.

Could quakes someday be minor annoyances or chances to *ride* them for fun?

Winter in Florida's fine but occasionally it's nice to feel the north land's crisp cold air!

Getting dressed for winter chores I see ant spray on the shelf and realize I'd rather be dealing with summer tasks any day!

The nice thing about shoveling a driveway is you might lose a few pounds in the process... that's if you don't die of a heart attack!

I'm not trying to be like the guys who shovel or blow their driveways to perfection. Just want fresh air and exercise, since cabin fever's a problem and indoor air quality isn't the answer.

I want my driveway to look good but don't want to appear obsessed, so I leave a few streaks of snow and ice... imperfection means I'm normal!

Despite my sarcasm it's cool to see *Samaritans* pulling stranger's cars out of ditches... free of charge!

I'm finally done shoveling and like a kid who's made a snowman, I stand back and admire my work. There should be some way to *sign* this Picasso, although like a snowman, it'll be gone in no time. I look around for some way to finish with a flair and decide to widen the entrance, since that's where we get stuck. Makes me wonder if surgeons sign their *work*... or even want to. Doctors always say *it went perfectly* when really they usually screwed up. They'd have to be nuts to put their *John Hancock* on people... I can only imagine what they've left inside me!



**Nor Cal**

It's a lot easier to push snow downhill than up, especially with a well-designed snow shovel. I found mine years ago in the middle of the street and it's the best I've ever had. Don't worry about getting your driveway perfect if you're shoveling, that's for guys

with snow blowers. I'm just making it possible for the letter carrier to deliver my cigars!

Shoveling, like other *pursuits* can be enjoyable... just don't overdo it or you'll get the proverbial heart attack or hernia. Done in moderation, it's good exercise and you're accomplishing something productive at the same time. It's also *open ended* because we won't really finish till spring.

Inevitably the city plow comes by and seals our driveway with a snow drift. Maybe they're doing us a favor, keeping us off the street since we really shouldn't be driving unless like the weatherman says, it's "absolutely necessary."

I hope no one saw me using my Tucson as a snow plow it may not have been a complete debacle but it sure wasn't a success☺

The second big snowstorm of the year has arrived and my shoveling standards have diminished considerably and I won't bother admiring my work... this time it'll be *quick and dirty*.

Then the third major storm hits and suddenly shoveling's a drag! After two hours I finally see the light at the end of the tunnel but there's still another ton of heavy snow to remove.

As my herniated body cries out, I remember it's only \$ 50 to hire a plow, versus a \$ 3,000 deductible and three months to recover from another surgery! Regardless I keep shoveling because I want to lose the ten pounds gained over the holidays... is this what they call penny wise and pound foolish?

After shoveling the driveway for seventeen years, I still hit the same cracks and the shovel still gouges me... you'd think by now I'd see it coming!

It's 22 below with the wind chill but it feels great in the hot tub, where the house protects me from the wind. We've had over a foot of snow and its come in handy for re-filling our leaky tub! Today I'm using 10 pound ice chunks that float like icebergs in the ocean... all I need is a rubber ducky to have some real fun.

It's a cold morning, the kind where skin instantly freezes to metal. Three days in a row while exiting the tub, I've grazed the fire pit and lost a layer of skin... ouch!

Those of us in the snow belt get pretty good with a shovel or snow blower and we're proud of our work. It's the same in the summer with the mower, we like to look at the lines and the straighter the better! We refine our technique and compare ours to the neighbors but when we retire and move south, very few miss our shovels!

An era has ended ... after fifteen years, the hot tub's bit the dust and I can't replace it. Now I soak in the Jacuzzi and enjoy the winter wonderland though the window... not a bad deal!

The rest of the family doesn't like Indiana in the wintertime, calling it gray and gloomy. I don't see it that way at all... at least compared to Baghdad and Kabul!

### Wisdom

"The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are"... C.S. Lewis

A philosopher might be more profound but comedians are more popular. We'd rather hear funny stories than *wisdom*... after all, don't *we* have that covered? Not to mention that philosophy often *is* a joke and comedy can provide greater insight than pontificating!

Of course it's far more difficult to do something great than something average... but that shouldn't stop us from trying and the *blunder* is doing nothing at all.

Wisdom's usually a combo of common and un-common sense combined. It's also evenly *distributed* between brilliant and ordinary people.

Wisdom and intellect overlap but aren't the same... lucky ones have a measure of both.

Thinking about things too much is like everything else... eventually you reach the point of diminishing returns.

The wise man gives scant advice, the fool heeds even less!

“It is the province of knowledge to speak and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen”... Oliver Wendell Holmes (Hmmm?)

## Work

“My father taught me to work; he did not teach me to love it”... Abraham Lincoln

Funny thing, the more I work, the more I need to work!

Some things never change... you still get paid more for exercising your brain than for breaking your back!

Behind the comforts we enjoy, are people with dirty hands and bloody knuckles... they deserve respect!

Most of the *working stiffs* I've known suffer from the whammies of substance abuse and minimal education. They spend thousands on their habits and work at low-paying jobs which creates a vicious circle. Forget about getting ahead...most of them can't keep up! They make vital contributions to society but their lifestyle can make them more of a drain on *the system* than those who don't have addictions.

Whether they know it or not, low paid workers have the ability to improve the lives... unfortunately many never do. Few challenge the monkey on their back or admit he's even there. It's easier to blame someone else than take responsibility for evicting the hitch hiker who's holding them down...



There's a bell curve related to *Working stiffs*... at one end are the *temporarily* down and out, at the other are people with no marketable skills or the drive to attain them.

If you like your job and it pays well, you're ahead of the pack...most of us have jobs we hate, that don't even pay the bills!

"Nothing is more reliable than a man whose loyalties can be bought with hard cash" ...Boris Balkan

Work for a living, is like hunting... to feed the family, don't aim for Rabbits... shoot for Moose!

Like most people I live for the weekend...during the week I just try to survive the rat race and anxiously wait for Friday!

It's a shame but when you tell someone they've *done a great job*, they let up and things go down-hill in a hurry. Whether a waiter, contractor or child excessive praise just leads to trouble.

I'm not proud that I lie and tell clients I have employees... can we leave it at that or are you going to keep beating me up? I could construct some kind of *rational* defensive but would rather not. We can call them *fabrications* or *exaggerations* but admit it or not, many of us lie when we "have to."

We're *desperate*, have bills to pay and looking for the easiest way to make a sale. Any lie resides somewhere on the bell curve...some may be worse but they are all *falsifications*. We justify lies by saying we have to feed our kids and we can't live on the street. That notwithstanding, any salesmen feels better when he's made an "honest" sale!

Never underestimate the destructive power of a Monday... there'll be *fires* to put out and boat loads of grief!

Driving home after eight appointments I'm exhausted and wonder *why am I doing this?* Is it to pay bills or to buy things we don't really need? So if I opt instead for a subsistence level life, will I be less exhausted... chances the problems will just be magnified!



**How many of us, by fate, events or circumstance end up not living the life we expected to?**

**It's 8:00 am, I'm walking the hood and have been up since 4:00 but have I done anything productive? It depends on how you define it... I know I've been trying to!**

**Sometimes we're efficient, sometimes we're not but most people strive to do better. Others are inefficient and make no attempt to improve, expecting taxpayers to pick up their slack and that my friends is an outrage.**

**I've made dozens of calls for appointments and now like a hunter who's set snares, I sit back to see what if anything I'll catch!**

**You must force *certain* words to come out in order to make things happen. If the words don't come, neither will the desired outcome. If you don't *specifically* ask for the sale, you'll rarely get it...even if you're the greatest *expert* in the world.**

**You begrudge us a week vacation in Florida but idolize Wall Streeters making \$ 600 million a year and all the while you waste away in squalor. Congratulations, you've swallowed their crapola – hook, line and sinker.**

**When somebody pushes you hard to work at a frenetic pace, compromising your safety to enrich themselves, why not turn the tables and slow down? You'll be killing two birds with one stone... not only are you saying you won't be a slave, you're also reminding *yourself* that you're free and won't be exploited. Rushing about at the bosses pleasure leads to little good for you bad karma for him.**

**I'm like Peter Gibbons in "Office Space"... unmotivated. Why should I work harder for mammon when it just leads to more taxes and more people trying to take it.**

**"You can't make someone understand something if their salary depends on them not understanding it"... Upton Sinclair**

## Writing

“There isn’t anything to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed”... Ernest Hemingway

Despite having a cynical streak, I believe in taking chances and in trying to leave the world a better place than it was when we arrived... **others may prefer me to mind my own business**😊

If you can't be enigmatic at least be vague... what?

If I was a writer in Iraq or Iran, I'd have to fear the knock on the door in the middle of the night. Here *for the most part* all I have to fear is being ostracized... **our system's better but not perfect enough to rest on our laurels, especially when our keystrokes, email, phone calls and purchases are being tracked.**

It's therapeutic to journal and good to edit our work and exciting to dream of being published. Editing encourages us to rethink our opinions but we shouldn't water them down too much in a probably futile effort to appeal to a broader audience.

If you're writing for 1% of the population, realize that 99% won't take kindly to you.

Just as people who talk all the time waste a lot of time, people who write *constantly* are wasting theirs. You have to listen, read and observe in order to absorb useful information.

**I keep hearing that the Internet is allowing huge numbers of people to become authors. Maybe more of us *are* becoming "authors" but that doesn't mean anyone's reading our work**😞

One reason I stopped smoking was I thought it interfered with my goal of becoming a writer. Twenty years hence I haven't accomplished that goal, so should start smoking again... I think not.

What's worse for a writer... being discredited or being unknown? I think the latter is worse since *discredit* can "come and go." If there's anything good about being unknown, its that you aren't discredited... yet.

Writers try making sense of the world and there're plenty of resources available to help. There's; religion, books, science, observation and experience but even with these, we never *really* figure out what the heck's going on!

Should authors burst bubbles, raise questions and destroy fantasies? For the most part *yes* but many believe, if you don't have anything nice to say, don't write anything at all.

Don't state the obvious...let readers recognize it themselves, only if they're likely to miss the point should it be explained.

Every once in a while, you'll change some one's mind...more often, we have to be *content* with chronicling the world around us.

Writing's often a reaction and backlash to that which we don't like... it can also be as necessary as breathing!

The written word can reach a large audience *if* you get published, which isn't easy. The spoken word reaches a smaller audience but is less subject to editorial manipulation and rejection. In this country you can still stand on a street corner and rant... at least a few people will hear you!



**Indianapolis, IN**

**If what I write seems negative, it's because I'm often writing about what I see as negative and a negative times a negative equals a positive... at least that's what they taught us in math class!**

**Every time we edit our work, it becomes more watered down... eventually meaning nothing whatsoever.**

**I'm not sure there's anything completely original within these pages... surely others have arrived at similar conclusions based on their own experiences and somewhere they've probably been recorded.**

**Editors, literary agents and publishers are censors, even more than they are marketers and promoters. If they don't like, agree or think they'll profit - they politely say *get lost!***

**When I was young I *wasted* my time daydreaming, now I waste it writing.**

The only way to *avoid foot in mouth disease* is by keeping it firmly closed. Otherwise everything we say *can and will* be used against us. In my case no one's prying it open but this darn tongue still wags too much!

I read Kurt Vonnegut's obituary and saved the newspaper in order to show our kids his quotes but I never found the "right time" and like sadly it ended up a drop cloth.

If I complain, it's meant to encourage people to do something positive. Leaving *well enough alone*, leads to things falling apart, be they ideals or sky scrapers... it's a law of nature.

I write because it's one of the few things that doesn't feel like flipping burgers... not that I have anything against burgers.

If a guy can't get his point across in a hundred pages what's the use? That being said, guess I've done it again 😊